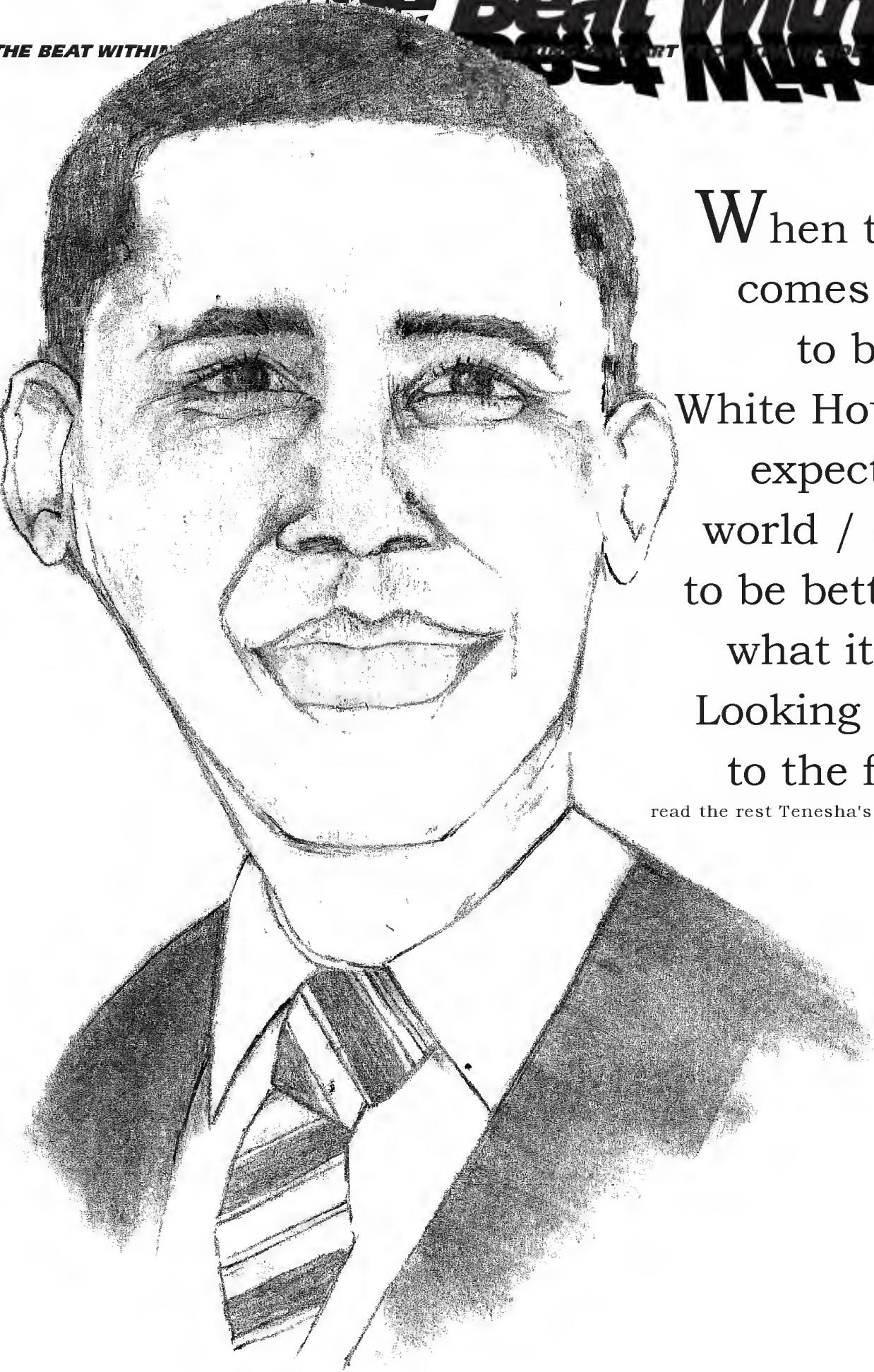


The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN
ISSUE 14.01

When the time comes for him to be in the White House, I'm expecting our world / country to be better than what it is now! Looking forward to the future...

read the rest Tenesha's piece on page 43

Welcome Beat writers and Beat readers as we bring to you the first Beat Within of the New Year. Long gone with '08 and kicking it into '09 the Beat is ready to keep this non-stop hustle going of putting out our publication every single week for rest of the year. We hope this New Year brings joy to many of you, as if you're reading this right now, you are alive and breathing and should be happy. No matter what your situation might be looking like, whether it be good or bad, there's always something to look forward to. The staff at The Beat would like to wish for you the best to everybody and their families.

The year has already started off with many surprises, and more are yet to come. We're starting off the beginning of the year with a brand new President of the USA, in Barack Obama. So hopefully our country will head to a brighter future, and Obama can uphold most of the promises he has made. He has promised for change.

Now change, that can mean a lot. Obama has a load on his shoulders as we are headed into tough times – as if these times are not tough already -, and is left to clean up the big mess that Dubya Bush made, which, won't be easy.

I, myself, am not too big on politics. To me politicians are made of shhh, and act like solutions are hard to come by with the problems our society faces. When in truth the solutions are right under their nose. Now it isn't because I'm not allowed to vote that I'm not into politics. If I was allowed to vote I would have probably voted for Obama - I, myself, am personally pleased to see history and watch with my own two-eyes Obama get elected.

As I watch the whole world in awe, and people talk about change, I hope that people realize that change doesn't come from one person, or overnight, especially from the president. You all know the president has to attempt to appeal to everyone's beneficiary standard. He has to please both minorities, the poor working class, and also the rich folks that elected him. Think about it people.

By no means am I trying to down play Obama's win in the elections. I heard the word "change" many times, not only through Obama's mouth in his speeches, but from people on the street, friends, family, strangers, etc. It is incredible the way that people want to bring about change but are not willing to change themselves. Change is powerful. But for us to want to see this world to change we have to change ourselves too.

The other day I was bumping a 2Pac's song, "They Don't Give A Damn About Us", which is real political. Basically, the song was saying "They" as in the government or society doesn't care about us (minorities). But how can you care for someone who doesn't care about themselves first?

We have to be responsible and take action if we want change in our communities or in society period. I'm not talking about negative action I'm talking about positive action. We have to prove to our selves that we want positive changes for other people to see that too. For instance changes in the law, bringing equal justice regardless of what race we are, and attacking issues in the communities. Those are battles worth fighting for, and maybe dying for. Better than a color or a street that you don't even own.

We can't go around being ignorant no more. Money is the root of all evil folks, but money is not the solution to all of your problems. Some of y'all need to stop being greedy.

I have to admit that I was greedy at one point and all I cared about was the fast money. But that fast money didn't mean shhh after all the times I went to jail for it. That fast life was leading me to a real fast end. I needed to slow down and take a look around me and realize what's really important, like being here for my daughters. They don't

want me to give them money. They want them to give them me, and be a dad to them. So I'm speaking out to you fathers, or mothers out there, or anyone listening that doesn't like their current situation.

Why are things the way they are? It's 'cause we ALL let it get like that. If we really feel that justice isn't being served then let's fight for it, instead of just keep on messing up and going back to jail.

In 2009 I hope for change also; and not because we have a new president. I look for change to all my people that's in the streets. Just think if we can all get to get together to unite and strive for a better cause. It would be BIG! I look for my people to become leaders instead of followers and start fighting over something really worth fighting for. Let's stop being greedy, stop thinking about just ourselves, and let's help each other out folks. If you want help don't be afraid to ask. If you want to help someone don't be afraid to help. You never know when sometime you might need help. Open your mind to new things and get educated. One love to everybody locked down! I wish you the best for 2009 and hope you achieve something great! I'm out!

Whew, nice work Omar. We appreciate your thoughtful words on change. We too want to see changes for the better, for every single one of us.

The topics addressed in this issue, although, sorry to say, many of your writings did not get into this issue, given the holiday break we suppose, were, "Gun Violence" - Guns are no joke. Too many of our friends and associates are resting in peace, as too many family members and friends carry eternal pain due to gun violence. As we know, many young people writing in The Beat fear for their lives given the choices they are making with their lives, and find protection behind the gun, and will risk their own lives and freedom by packing a gun. We all know guns kill and cause damage that is irreversible. This week want you to share with us your thoughts on guns. Can you tell us the first time you saw a gun, or the first time you held a gun? What immediately comes to mind when you think of guns? Do you believe we need to have guns in our lives and in our communities? Would you want your child to pack a gun? Share with us your thoughts on how we can stop gun violence, or why you think it's only going to get worse.

The second topic, "Don't Go There" - What if anything, is too serious to be joked about? Tell us something that you do not find amusing. How does it affect you when someone talks about that "something"? Can you tell us what that something is? Can you tell us of a time when someone went there, or you went there not knowing how the person would react so intensely?

The third topic, "Speak up" - You notice a self-destructive behavior pattern in a friend who is clearly unaware of it. Would you point it out? If it's not us, we have friends and associates who do not see how they are slowly destroying themselves by their actions - maybe it was you. Well this week, we want to hear from you about a time when you should have or did speak up to save your loved one/friend from further destruction. Maybe it was you? Tell us how you now recognize your ills, and wish someone would have pointed out your pains. How did you/they respond?

Last but not least, "Weird Foods" - Does your family eat pig's feet? What about menudo? What about chicken feet for dim sum? Do you or your family eat sushi, raw fish, tofu, okra? Write about the weird foods that you grew up eating or secretly enjoy eating. Describe your experience with those foods, taste, the way you or your family prepares them.

All right friends, thanks for picking us up! We'll see you next week. This issue goes out to you mothers and fathers who are doing the right things for your children.

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THEBEATWITHIN.ORG VOLUME 14.01

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble censoring inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't want to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of founders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications programs - California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of San Joaquin Valley, Community Technology Foundation, iCalifornia, Community Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marymarie Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stuliff Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, Monterey, Fresno, Salinas, Oak Hill - Washington, C.S. San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, shinyo-er Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surbiton Foundation, The California Endowment, Titus Foundation, Van L. Ben Sels/Kom's Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerffert Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Purchasing Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thank you all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County, Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillo County, New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at 275 Ninth St. SECA, 94133 or call (415) 533-4171 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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The World
Is
Changing



The Beat

A shout-out

I just wanted to give a shout out to my Junbug Josh, all the Roswell boys, the homegirls in Manzano, and all the homies love ya'll ain't no sun shine behind these walls and to all my Support and family smile for me, be home 1 day!

-Xavier

From The Beat: Normally we do not let one just do a random shout out piece, ok, so don't forget to use your support that's what they're there for, but keep in mind not to abuse their support.

Till the end of time

Girl every day you're on my mind, and the thoughts break my heart. Behind these doors doing time and I know your so far. I can't stand the thought of being away from you.

Sitting in my cell feelin' down and blue, but girl I know that our love is real. So please don't go 'cause this is how I feel. Even though the hard times by my side is where you stayed baby girl your heart is mine and our love will never fade. So many miles apart so many months I've been away, but you and me will always be as we wait out the days.

As the days go by girl I'm yours, your mine, always and forever 'till the end of time. T'll the end of time baby be mine

Every day I go out side I look up to the sky. I can't run, can't hide and it makes me want to cry. I'm locked behind these gates, and I miss my baby girl. The day I see you I can't wait 'cause you're my whole world.

As I sit here I ask God why did he put me in this place. I regret every minute I'm away and can't see your beautiful face. I remember night after night you would hold me in your arms.

Every thing was ok, feelin' like I couldn't be harmed. Then I kissed your lips and told you I had to go. I'm sorry for all I missed and how I left you alone. That was the last time I looked into your eyes.

I went and committed a crime and lost two years of my life. I never told you every thing I wanted to say, but I love you baby girl more and more every day...

-Xavier

From The Beat: Hold to the love you have for your girl, but you must remember it was your choice and your actions that put you there not, "God" or any one else. When you get out do your best not to loose any more time from your life, and don't forget to keep writing. Let us at The Beat know how your doing.

To The Beat

A beat what's poppin?

It's yo boy Xavier aka Problems com'in at you posted up in YDDC (juvenile prison) IVY cottage all day.

Let me tell you a little about my self I'm 17 from a town called Roswell and I've been locked up for 2 years already. Since December 07' my sentence is 2 years, but I aint trippin' 'cause I'm lucky I should have been a youthful offender, locked up 'till the age of 21, but when I did my crime I was drunk. Have you ever done something dumb when you were drunk, 'cause I did and I regret it every day.

It goes like this, it was a Friday my boys b-day, so we drank then we went to the skating park and my lil' homie who's like my brother walked out and a rival gang member hit him with skates. Busted his dome open and I had my ruru (ruger) so I started bustin'. That fool pushed his young cousin in front of him and she caught three of them bullets. I'm so sorry for that, but I wasn't thin'in but she lived. Then on Sunday morning we stole a van and I got caught up

From The Beat: We welcome the young writer, Xavier, from the Youth Diagnostic Development Center in the Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico. Our colleague and friend Steve Serna, is taking the steps and getting The Beat program up and running at the YDDC, and we appreciate his hard work and commitment to the young people and The Beat Community. We hope you enjoy these initial writings from Xavier, as we too become familiar with Xavier and hopefully other new writers and learn about what YDDC is all about.

Six guys in the shower at once, fights all day, barbwire and bars this is not juvenile or no camp cupcake if you get here your doing time.

Behind these walls

Behind these walls I sit because I did wrong.

Behind these walls people say is where I belong. Behind these walls I watch every day go by.

Why am I behind these walls,
God, please tell me why.

Behind these walls I'll stay for the next year.

Behind these walls it's not often we shed a tear. Behind these walls they say they will help me make a change.

Behind these walls

makes me worse and causes me pain.

Behind these walls is where I'll be.

Behind these walls kids' wanting help is all I see. Behind I learn to love this place I'm in.

Behind these walls

is like home and I want to see again.

Behind these walls is called YDDC.

Behind these walls I won't leave
even if I had the key.

Behind these walls I develop a mentality
for this place.

Behind these walls I learn never love just hate. Behind these walls

I want to stay and never want to go.

Behind these walls I lay

'cause behind these walls is my home!!!

-Xavier

From The Beat: We are truly sorry to hear about the last three lines of this piece. With this mentality and way of thinking is why our adult prisons are full. Learn to love not hate; learn to want to stay out from behind them walls. Learn from your past mistakes to better yourself, so you don't end up back behind them walls.

'cause we did a drive by and my lil' homie got away, but got caught two months later.

I had to do a six-month term in a RTC (Residential Treatment Center) Then a year hear at YDDC (children youth family department) my charges were aggravated assault, shooting at a dwelling occupant and unlawfully taking a motor vehicle.

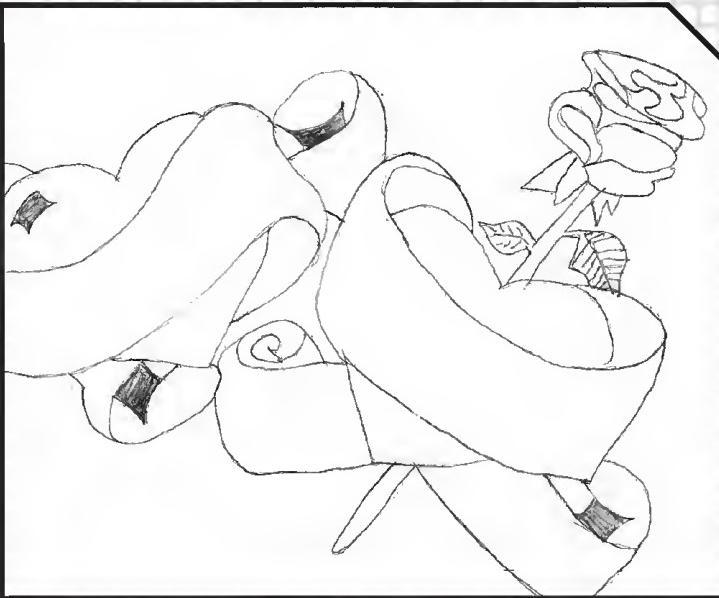
I just want to tell all y'all peeps that have a chance to do anything than a commitment, stay straight and let haters hate. Finish that, it's easy to wish I had that chance.

When you get to where I'm at it's not fun. Six guys in the shower at once, fights all day, barbwire and bars this is not juvenile or no camp cupcake if you get here your doing time. I'll be here 'till I'm 18, but that's enough about me.

Here's a few of many of my poems God Bless enjoy keep your head up peace.

- Xavier

From The Beat: Xavier it's good to hear that The Beat Within has spread to your facility and it's also good to hear that you want to participate in the program. We at The Beat look forward to reading your work. Don't forget to spread the word of The Beat.



The Historic Election

This election proved to me that the US is not the so called segregated country that many still call it. The fact that a black (multiracial) man was not only nominated, but elected president of the United States shows that people's racial prejudices or previous affiliations are overruled by the country's insistence on true leadership.

Although there have been many eligible black leaders, the fact is that in the past a majority of the country was still too ignorant to elect a black president.

-D, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We hope you are right about the country having moved beyond its racist past. It may take many more than one election to prove that. But this is an historic outcome. We hope that you and your children inherit a country that makes its choices based on performance and talent rather than skin color. We are closer to that ideal than ever before. To get there, we need to confront racism, sexism, homophobia, and all prejudices, whenever and wherever those ignorant beliefs surface.

RIP Lil' Daryas, Who Hears Our Cry

Who hears our cry
when the Judge wants
to sentence us to life
Who hears our cry
when we sit in these
rooms and ask God why
Why did you allow me
to throw away my life?
Who hears our cry
when we cry and pray at night
to have a blessed life.
Who hears our cry
when our brothas
and best friends die.
Most of all who hears
My Cry!
We miss you killed by senseless violence
Gone but never forgotten

-Son of God, Alameda

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss, and for the "senseless" death of this friend. How does he respond when he hears your cry? If you were blessed with a much shorter sentence than you may possibly face will you take back your life? Make the changes you need to? How are you responding and listening to your own cries? You have to feel worth the effort, you have to feel you and your life are worth more than just throwing it away.

Life Through My Eyes

Life through my eyes
would scare you half to death.
Gangs, rape, drugs and lies,
or just too many homies put down to rest.
Living my life in and out of institutions
and waking up with confusion.
I'm dazed and confused
but I refuse to lose.
I can't trust any one in my life
'cause ain't no one gonna do me right.
My family is all dead to me -
still alive, but they refuse to see me.
I hurt inside and they don't know that.
But I've messed up so much - there ain't
no turning back.
So step into my shoes and lace 'em up tight.
Make sure you're at my level and
ready to fight,
'cause life through my eyes
would scare you half to death.

-Jacqueline, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Beautifully written. And it's true - there's no going back, but that goes for any of us. In this life, we only get to go forward. But that's where old patterns can be broken and lives mended. Don't give up. Keep writing about your life. Write whenever you feel conflicted and confused. Writing is the next best thing to talking about what ails you, what concerns you.



Gun Violence

You are gone because of a gun
 You took a bullet to the head
 Because of a girl
 Do you see what you have done
 Now I lost my best friend
 Why did you leave
 The love you had was so great
 But now it's gone
 Because of a gun
 What should I do
 Now that you're gone
 Because you had to make a name
 You're my friend why did you leave
 You were only 18
 But now your life is gone
 Because you didn't back down
 And now I walk the streets
 All alone with no one by me
 Your gone because of a gun
 And I saw you bleed
 I watched you die
 Now it really hurts me
 It's like a nightmare that plays in my head
 It will never leave
 You're my homie my right hand man
 the one who never left me
 But now you're gone
 My heart bleeds everyday I don't see you
 I feel lost your love is gone
 You were great, happy, loving, honest, sweet, and kind
 Now you're in the ground
 Where bugs are eating at your soul
 You're my homie
 You died to a gun
 I miss you
 Please come back to me
 The homie I had left because of a guy
 That killed my homie
 His life is gone because of a gun
 Now it's time for me to leave

-Shawnta', Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: It's one thing to have a friend, or a loved one die because of "a gun", but its even worse when you have to witness the event. This is something no child should have to witness. Remember there are councilors out there that are more then willing to help you out, if you decide to seek out help and guidance for the death of a loved one.

My Favorite Place

My favorite place to be is at home.

The reason why my favorite place is home is because I can do what I want. I can eat, sleep, and talk whenever I want to. I don't got people telling me when I can and cannot do something.

When I go to the house I just get in my covers and sleep. Then I wake up and get a bowl of Apple Jacks. Then I smoke a Newport and hop on my Xbox 360. When I am done I just slap my music all loud and be in my own mode.

The first thing I like about my favorite place is I can walk out my door and walk in my house. But the most important thing about my favorite place is I am the man of the house.

- Marquise, Alameda

From The Beat: You've done a really nice job describing the comfortable feeling of being at home. We hope you get back there soon and never have to leave again unless you want to. We imagine there are people in your home who also make it special for you. We'd love to hear a little about them, too, in a future issue.

Please Don't Go There

I remember when I started self destructing, I felt alone and angry. I was constantly fighting with my family and other girls, and everyone believed I as just this evil person that hated on everyone just for the hell of it. But like everything in this world there's a reason behind actions.

Every weekend I'd go to grandma's and grandpa's and at six I'd sleep there to feel..."safe." At about 5am every morning grandma would wake up and cook and clean, and every morning grandpa would molest me from 6 to 8. I hated every weekend at grandma's, and I hated life when grandpa stopped doing this to me. I forgave him and asked God for help.

About 2 years later at 11 my grandpa from the other side of my family did the same thing to me. I thought "it's all my" fault that I did this, and I hated the world. Both grandpas' told me I'd be called a whore if I ever said a word, but I told my Primo and he told my mom and my mom called the cops and they did nothing. Once again I was alone.

Later, my grandma that was married to the first man who molested me, asked me, "mija has anyone else ever done this to you?"

I said yes and her response was "He was probably drunk." And that was the end of that, and I never again talked about it.

Last year at fourteen I told my story which helped, I'm talking to my therapist who listens and cares, and I'm slowly trusting and trying to be less violent. But once in a while a girl will get tough and call me a "Whore" and I'll lose my mind. Have respect, you never know what may trigger someone. Please don't go there.

-Anxious, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: Anxious, know your not alone. This is a very sad thing that happens to children, and it saddens us every time we hear of story like this. We are glad you are talking to a therapist, which is the best thing you can do. Don't keep this bottled up, because all it will do is tear you apart, and remember this was not your fault.

My First Gun

I bought my first gun when I was a young teen. It was a 9mm. I bought it because I got a gun pulled on me a few days before even though I was out numbered two to ten or fifteen; I wasn't scared until they pointed the gun at me.

I felt a cold sweat break over my whole body. Just as they were getting out the car with the pistol, a man came out of his house and scared them away by threatening to call the police.

So I bought a gun from an older friend of mine. After I had it for a few days I felt untouchable. I felt like nobody could tell me nothing. I always kept it cocked and loaded inside my pants on my hip.

The thing that I didn't prepare for was when I was gonna actually use it. One day it came a time when I had to use it and I wasn't ready. We got into a shoot-out. I was very paranoid for the next few weeks and thankful that I was still alive.

Overall I'm just trying to say is you shouldn't carry a gun because you might really have to use it and personally I don't think that the consequences are worth "being cool."

-Lil' Rob, Solano

From The Beat: We agree with you, and yet wonder how you will be protected now? Maybe it's not worth it to carry it and face the consequences of using it, even if it means relying on something else... besides a gun...to help you. Did you thank the man who was brave enough to come out of his house to help you? It also sounds like it would've been pretty easy to have shot yourself in the leg, or worse.

Making That Mistake

Here I stand in a place I never expected to be. I'm 7 weeks pregnant and a single parent of one already. Wishing, I could make things better but I don't regret it. Just wishing I could have made better choices in my past. I thought I was doing good but like I said, what I did in my past brought me here today. I never was expecting it and if I did have a wish, I wish I could turn back time and I would choose another path. What can I say? What I did in the past made me who I am today. A better person would stand up for every reason that happened in my life and be stronger as everyday I live to tell my story.

-Nancy, Fresno

From The Beat: We're not going to sugarcoat our reply to you because it is important that you get accurate feedback. There are those that have been in your position. It is important that you get support and seek out mentors and people that can help you make the best decisions. This is a serious situation and the stakes are high but there are others that have been through this. You are not alone. We are here to help you.

Change Life of Violence

The first time I picked up a gun I was seven. I seen it because it was sitting on a table-then I picked it up, played with it a little bit, then when I was ten I start carrying it around with me just in case I ran into an enemy and I could use it.

I took it to school in my backpack and I never got caught with it. I never took it out to show people.

When I have kids I don't want them to grow up rough like I been through. I'm gonna treat them right, no neglecting, and show them more love than my parents showed me.

I'm going to live in a different area. When I go to my placement I'm going to learn how to survive more on my own. Spend my money more wisely and help me get a job.

I'm going to get my tattoo lazered off and stay away from drugs and crime. I'm just going to smoke black and miles, no drugs. I'm going to feel so much happenin' in my life. I haven't had me in a long time. I got everybody in my corner when I get out-they want me to not come back to jail.

-Lil' Ant, Solano

From The Beat: Well despite a rough beginning it sounds like you've got a good mind and plans too. We wish you well. We wish you could share with the Beat readers how you'd teach your kids to deal with this environment in a way that is healthy and positive for them.

Gun Violence

Some of us use guns for protection. Or some of us do it just because we like to just shoot. But when you take someone's life, it's not fun and games. You start to think if you get killed, you know yo' mom would be heart-broken. That would take ten years off her life, and no one wants their mom to die before she has to. That's why people should not play with guns. But people feel they life be in danger.

-Lil' Rocko, San Francisco

From The Beat: What you said is very important, which is that everyone has a mother that loves them. When you take someone's life, that person feels no more pain, but their mothers and loved ones are left to grieve for the rest of their lives. Just like "no one wants their mom to die before she has to," no mom wants her child to die before he has to. We want to thank you for looking deeper than the surface. Keep thinking and writing.

Your Pride will kill you in the End

Pride. This is something that everybody should let go of. Eventually our pride will be our demise. You people have too much pride, you protest something that is not yours, and you get mad when people say ef... that or ef... this" and it's not even yours.

If Gangs only killed other gangs I would have absolutely no problem with them, but they don't. Stray Bullets kill little boys and girls who have a future. You think you are a real man because you hold a gun and cheat your own words. You are a coward. You try to hurt everybody who rebels against your unwritten law. You lash out at anyone who has a personal opinion. You are all arrogantly ignorant.

Some say "Ignorance is Bliss." To an extent this is true, if you don't know what's up then you know what's up then you don't know what you're missing. Throw your pride away like you know is wrong-

Derrick, Santa Clara

From The Beat: As always, Derrick, you throw a challenge to the world. You're right, a gun doesn't make you any more of a man. In fact, people usually use it to cover up their weaknesses, and they rot from the inside. Either that or they use it to threaten others, who kill them from the outside.

I'm Going To Prove Them Wrong

I'm going to prove them wrong
I'm going to prove to people
That I'm going to stay out of here
And don't come back
I'm going to prove to myself
That I can do right and not wrong

I'm going to prove to my mom
I'm going to prove to my dad
I'm going to prove to anybody
That think I can't do nothin'
Especially my dad
He think I can't do nothin', nothin'
But I'm about to show him somethin', somethin'!

-Dri, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your dad is wrong! Just writing this proves that you can do something! You are something — and you are worth something! If your dad doesn't already understand that, then it's his problem. What are your plans to change the path you've been on, and to accomplish your goals?

True Love

True love is when you can't be without me and I can't be without you.... When I look in your eyes I feel like I can see the beautiful earth from the moon.

True love is something that starts off small like a caterpillar then grows into something gorgeous like a butterfly whose destination is cloud nine....

True love is when you hurt.... I feel your hurt from a distance.... So, I make you feel better like with a turf meal and hugs and kisses....

True love is something that doesn't come around everyday or every year.... But I tell you what.... I think I found it....

Outro: This is for everyone who loves somebody and who's locked up in Alameda County.... Keep your head up and stay solid.

- Manie, Alameda

From The Beat: This is really lovely, Manie. You're a true poet and found a beautiful way to share the depth of your feelings. We love that you added a wish for the same fortune for others.

Smile

Sometimes life seems hard and difficult
as if you don't want to carry on.
Life sometimes may feel unfair
as if the whole world is against you.
Even if it seems as if your going against a whole army
you always have to try to keep a sense of humor.
Through thick or thin, rain or snow
you should always remain positive and smile
through all the bull shhh.
Life ain't easy, but you can't give up.
If you fall down stand back up and try twice as hard
always learn from your mistakes and spread your wings
fly through all the thunder storms and look for the sun.
The power of a smile can be very powerful.
At the end of each journey lies new opportunities.
The adventures never end aim to be the best,
settle for nothing less.
So remember any situations you may be in
keep your sense of humor laughter
or a smile can make the most difficult situations
bearable.
So smile there will always be brighter days.

-Nguyen, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are words of wisdom for anyone. Life is really hard sometimes, but if you believe and you work and you do what you can, you can live right and have what you need.

Drunk

I know this drunk
Who can't give up the bottle
Not even if his life
Depended on it
He's so lost
In the game of beer
All the alcohol's gone to his head
And he acts like he can't hear
How I wish I could
Make the alcohol just disappear
It's done him enough damage
Can't he see?
I know he's not blind
Nor retarded mentally
I've tried to help him
But he continues to push me away
Far from his loved ones
Continuing his days
I know this drunk
He is my little brother
People tell me
Not to even bother
But I can't leave him
And let him rot
In his pain
I love him too much
I'd just let him go
And fall into shame
People don't believe in him much
But I sure do
I'll always be here
For him
'Cause that's what big sisters do
I thought you knew

-Queen Bee, Marin

From The Beat: Your brother, who has been in juvy with you, writes almost every week in The Beat about his drinking problem. It's wonderful that you try to help him with it and that you're so tender toward him.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

You know people shed fake tears saying that they are going to change, but when they get out they put forth no effort but to go back to the same environment to do what got them in the halls in the first place. Makes no sense. Instead of doing time, you need to actually change, and nobody can make you do it but yourself. "You can lead a horse to water, but can't make him drink."

Take heed because a lot of us got kids or on the way, when we're merely kids ourselves. We say that we are grown, until they are trying us as adults, then we say, "Man, I'm only a kid! I'm nowhere an adult!"

So I say — and I'm listening to my own advice, as well — if you going to change, then change. Stop listening to people who are at fault because while you are actually crying, they are outside these walls laughing and smiling, trying to take what you have or snatch away your very last. Your only friend is your moms, so keep your radars up 'cause these streets is foul. "Holla"

-Yf, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is so much wisdom in this piece, it makes us wonder why you were not able to heed it before doing whatever it was that brought you here. But, to be honest, we're less interested in the past than in the future. If you truly are listening to your own advice, your future should be a lot brighter than your past!

Struggle

Some struggle with drug addiction
Some struggle with no parents
Some struggle with rape and abuse
Some struggle with fear of being abandoned.
Some struggle with disabilities and retardation
Some struggle with poor families and no jobs or education
Some struggle with no role models or father figures
But all in all what do I struggle with?
I struggle with not having that father figure love. That's why I search for love in all the wrong places.
I struggle with breaking the cycle of becoming like my mother and grandmother
I struggle with trusting, males and being understanding and considerate of their struggles
Some struggle with being patient and being ornery
Some struggle with dealing with stress under pressure
Some struggle with my inner desire of negativity
We all have struggles. Face yours.

-Precious, Fresno

From The Beat: We struggle with being overwhelmed and thinking we can't make a difference. We struggle with negativity, doubt and wanting to close up, wanting to hide and no longer feel but we are willing to work on our struggles today and that makes today a good day.

Mo' Of A Man

Hey my friend, do ya feel more of a man?
Blood spilt on the floor, gun in yo' hand...
Who's sick about it, mo'?
Was it all in yo' plan"
And I'm still wondering how you feel mo' of a man.

Violence and guns is a problem we need to look into more. You can be a role model to a youngsta who look at you as what a man should be. Represent what you want to the future generation to be.
Persistence and a goal make a man successful.

-John San Francisco

From The Beat: We really like what you are trying to teach in this piece, from your rhyme to your thoughts at the bottom, especially the part about representing what you want the future to be [what you want for your children and their children]. A friend told us, "Your attitude will determine your altitude." If that's true, you should soar very high!

They Don't Know Me

Bangin', hustlin', living life as a G
 These punks don't know me. They don't know me
 Corrupted police on the streets
 These cops don't know me. They don't know me
 The DA's talking about I'm a menace to society
 These fools don't know me. They don't know me
 Sentencing me away from my family
 These judges don't know me. They don't know me
 Sitting in a cell feeling hella lonely
 These staff don't know me. They don't know me
 My PO said I'll be in Y.A until 19th
 These systems don't know me.. They don't me
 You know why? Because only I know me....

-Nightmare, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We like the rhythm of this sad lament, and we even agree with it. But in the end, does it matter whether "they" know you, or not? [After all, you don't know them, either.] The bitter reality you're dealing with is that whether or not they know you, they have power over your life and over your future. And you have given them that power. You can hate them and blame them, but unless you make some changes, you'll be answering to them...

My Horrible July 4th

Gun violence. They can hurt people that care for people.

I was in Springfield for a week, away from my bestest friend. I felt like there was something wrong. Something told me to go back to my friend's house. His name was Joe. He was my dad's best friend that he told to look after me. But, anyways...

I went back to Joe's house and knocked on the door. He told me to go up to Kimmy's house and check on her. Kimmy is somebody that has known us for ten years or something...

Joe also said that she hasn't come over for a couple of days, and usually she comes over every day. So I walked to her door and rang the doorbell. Nobody answered. I went back to Joe's house, and on the way back I looked in the parking lot to see if her truck was there. It was. That's when I started getting worried. When I told Joe she didn't answer, he told me to just walk in and "tell Kimmy I sent you." I said, "Okay."

I went back and just walked in the door. Right when I walked in, I heard a "bang bang." I thought it might be the fireworks. I kept walking in and I saw Kimmy facing the wall on her side, lying down on her bed.

I said, "Kimmy, wake up, wake up." She didn't make a sound. I walked and poked her. She still didn't move or make a sound. Then I pulled her towards me. All of a sudden I fell to the ground and she rolled into my arms. All I saw was a big hole in her head and a gun in her hand. There was a note taped to her chest that said, "I'm so sorry I had to do it! Take care of my son."

I started screaming and ran out the door. I told Joe what I saw and called the police. I couldn't believe she was really gone. That was no fireworks! One of my friends killed themselves!

I'm scarred for life. My life will never be the same. That is why I despise guns, no matter what the reason is.

-Christina, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is nothing we can say to add to the power of what you have described! We are so sorry that your friend took her life, and that you had to be the one to find her! We hope you can use this terrible experience, and the passion you bring to his subject, to make others understand that every gun death leaves others behind to grieve, and to nurse their scars for the rest of their lives. If you can convince even one person to lay down his or her weapon, then the pain you are suffering might help someone else. We hope you find peace!

You don't know the real me

My feet don't move
 My heart barely beats
 My life seems gone but only to me
 My blood is thick
 My tears run down my cheek
 I cry and cry
 My body is weak
 My mind is lost
 My tummy drops to my feet
 My nights are dark
 My days are cold
 I cry and cry
 But this pain will never go
 My world seems to be nothing
 But a bad dream
 When will I wake up from this
 Nightmare
 When will I be happy
 Why did you leave me
 I cry and cry
 What do I do
 You don't even know the real me
 You're my Mom but you left me

-Shawnta', Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: We at the Beat are sorry to hear and feel the pain you mother caused. The question we have for you is why did your mom leave? Is she still alive? If so what would have caused your mom to leave?

Aint Tryin' To See a Shirt with My Face

I stay strapped 'cause it's funk in the streets
 Some don't like where I'm from so they want beef.
 I shot at people 'cause I'm tired of talking
 But I ain't tryna be layin' in a closed coffin.
 I ain't tryna see a shirt with my face that RIP
 I rather be judge by twelve then carried by six.

-Thizz Kid, Solano

From The Beat: This is well written. The rhythm and rhyme work, they rhyme never undercuts the meaning, and the images are clean. How can you be sure no one ever wears this shirt with your name on it? What else are you good at, besides writing?

"It hurts"

My head
 My stomach
 My arms
 My legs
 My body, it's weak
 I'm stuck
 Frozen,
 Paralyzed
 I can't move
 It's the pain
 Make it stop
 It hurts
 I hope you can hear me
 I need you
 The cure
 Where is it?
 I need it
 It hurts
 (a soft whisper) "help."

-Shadow, Alameda

From The Beat: Sometimes a whisper can speak louder than the roar of a crowd. Your pain is real - but you're only as stuck as you feel, right? What do you do to ease the pain? Do you reach out to your loved ones, do you read, do you listen to music?

Two Sides Story, Not One

Dear Lord,

It's like I lost another, they killed Baby Skin, it's like I lost my brother. So before I go to sleep I pray and say good night to my mother. And the devil trying to do me just because I'm part of this shhh.

Over the life I live and the bodies I flip. I have lost a lot of homies so feelings I get. So when I pray to the Lord I guess he don't really trip.

Plus I get mad when the money gets ripped like God made this for us, to be workless. Young flies on the block pushing coke smoking dro and snatching purses. I got ninjas fighting murders like is it worth it? Young women selling their body instead of becoming nurses.

So I slide through the projects late night lurking. Riding up and down the street smoking and perking. Like this is my area but the earth is my surface. That's why I want to take a trip to Puerto Rico so I can say there ain't nothing I ain't never seen before. I watch the good die young and the bad die old.

Now is the time to watch my niece and my nephews grow. Instead of being a thug and selling rocks by the store I should watch my kids have kids and my grandkids grow.

Rest in Peace Lil' Ant.

-Dirt, Alameda

From The Beat: Dirt, you are a very talented young man. You can write, you can rhyme, you can think. What are you going to do with these talents of yours? At the end of the piece you say that you "should" watch your kids have kids instead of "being a thug and selling rocks by the store" but is this your intention and your plan? We hope so....

Skip's Broadcast: Guns

Beat, wha's poppin? It's me, the one-an-only, FlyBoy Skip, holdin' it down in this city-paid motel.

But cheah, I know how much controversy guns create in this country! I carry guns occasionally for protection, and most of the time I'm very paranoid when I'm in possession of one. I personally sometimes don't really feel I need it most of the time because honestly, I can beat the hell outta ninja if it came down to it 'cause none ninja pump fear in my heart.

But I don't see what the big fuss is. The government allow solders to go into Iraq with weapons of mas destruction looking for weapons of mass destruction. I don't see the point of that! But I have lost family and friends to bullets with no names and ninjas with no aim. I feel everybody should be able to protect themselves by any means necessary, like the great Malcolm X said, but just goin' around shootin' in the air or at random folk ain't reasonable. You gotta know what you doin'.

I first saw a gun as a toddler, and first held and shot one at the age of 11. I would never want my little girl to pack a gun. That's why I'm planning on bouncin' away from this craziness. But if we want it to end, we gotta work on ourselves.

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though you say you "don't see what the big fuss (about guns) is," you clearly do see it. The big fuss is exactly what you describe — "lost family and friends to bullets with no names." And since you "don't see the point" of sending soldiers to kill Iraqis, then you can't use that to justify using guns in your own community. Yes, the great Malcolm X did say that using any means to protect yourself is justified, but you have to ask yourself if holding a gun actually accomplishes that goal of self-protection. One of the worst things about carrying a gun is that it creates a false bravado, a sense that you're invulnerable, and thus you're likely to put yourself into situations that carry huge risks, which, if you were not strapped, you might have avoided. How many children have to die at the hands of other children [who don't have the judgment to drive a car, so can't have the judgment to carry deadly weapons] before we see this as a public health issue?

My Vicious Dogs

I like dogs. I like vicious dogs—rottweilers, pits, Germans. I had a rottweiler—it bit me. It had a lot of anger. I got my dog from my uncle. He probably treated him bad—that's why I got a little scare right here. My uncle beat the shhh out of him. I was five. He weighed 190-200. I didn't sell him, my oldest brother, he did. He (my brother's) locked up now.

I was little then. I can make a dog a guard dog. I'll knock a dog out if he comes at me.

I got two pits now—a mom and a dad. When my brother's dog was a puppy and it peed on the floor, he'd put the dog's face in the floor. He (the dog) never pissed on the floor again. You gotta train a dog. My brother trained his dog hella good. She never pissed on the floor again.

My mom has two dogs that are rottweilers—a mother and a father. The male did something to the female and they had puppies. I was locked up when the babies were born. When I got out I grabbed one of the sickest puppies there. I called him Rambo because he was a warrior—one of the toughest puppies, the youngest one of all of them. He was the last to come out. He beat up all of his brothers.

His head is humungous. He's seven months old now. He's crazy. He eats all day. When I come home with some food, he sits by me, waiting for me to give him some food.

My big brother is training him now. He's putting ten-pound weights on his neck so his chest will be out there.

I think he knows I'm gone, but he knows he's being taken care of. I think he misses me because I always took him out.

One night I came home late, at 3:00 in the morning, and he knew I was coming home. He's like your ride-or-die homie. He'll never run away from you. He'd run away from me a little way when he was little. Dogs don't like being on a leash. You talk to him, "If you don't wanna be on a leash, don't run away." I told him, "You keep on running, you gonna be on this leash, behind or in front of me." Now he doesn't run away. I tell him to sit, he sits. You gotta show him who's boss. He's fast, for real. If I tell him to run, he'll be back in fifteen seconds.

Pit bulls, rottweilers and Germans (shepherds) are my favorites. I had a dog who was a combination of a pit bull, rottweiler, a German and a Labrador. He was my cousin's dog. One night, my pit bull got out. She was a girl dog and somebody else's dog went after her. She got taken on. She escaped from our backyard, but came back three hours later.

When the babies came out, one came out a pit bull, one was like a German shepherd, one had the body of a rottweiller. Another was big and husky, and had a pit's face and a German shepherd's body. Another had a German shepherd's face and a rottweiller's body. The mother lives in Vallejo now.

When I was fighting my case, the babies were born, and when I got home, I started cherishing my love for them, seven babies, all boys. One was scary—he didn't like fighting. One was soft-type of friendly dog—he doesn't like to fight. If you don't train him, he won't listen. I guess if you train him, he'll fight.

Rambo was getting close to me, talking to me—"You and me, can we be cool?" I could see it in his eyes—he was gonna be a warrior. I fed all the dogs, but I fed him personally. The other ones stayed outside more—mine came in the house.

Now Rambo's chillin', waiting for me to come home. My two brothers—the second oldest one and the younger one, are taking care of him.

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: You tell a solid story about all your dogs. You are very tender with them. How have you trained your dog to be a guard dog? Do you think it's better to train a dog to be what you want, or let him become whoever s/he wants to become?



Life In General

What's up Beat? It's the homie Chango coming through once again in this messed up juvenile facility. Time just passes by like the second hand on a school clock. Countless awakenings by the click of the door.

I appreciate that I'm six feet above ground, so I start my day with a little happiness. I cherish being alive in this cruel and evil world, but it has trapped me in a cell nobody likes to be. I miss the outs, and I have to await years to come before I can step foot on city ground, smoking s stogie, and calling my girl so we can meet up and go to the movies, or she can come to my pad. And yeah, it's pretty self explanatory.

It's crazy how the world is doing its own thing, like growing, surviving, taking life, making life, living and trying to withstand the hate, love and deceit life has to offer us. It's hard to believe that people would commit suicide to this beautiful world. I would have to say to all the Beat readers reading my piece, cherish your mom because she is the only person that will do anything in her power to make sure you're safe and healthy.

Family always comes first, but drugs will take you further and further away from them. So life in general is hard to live, but it is worth living and making money to survive this world. So I love this world and when I hit the streets, it's going to be wrap.

Take care to all the homeboys doing time and do it smart. Stay up I'm out. Shaaaaoo!

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Every week, we look forward to the wisdom and beauty you bring to our pages, and each week we are not disappointed. We don't know if we could maintain your positive outlook on life if we were facing what you are facing, and that makes us even more grateful for your inspiration. Thank you, Chango.

Gun Violence Will Not End

The first gun I saw was a .22 Russian revolver. When I think of guns, I think of protection. Yes, I think there should be guns in the community. Yes, I would want my son to have a gun at a certain age.

You can never end gun violence. The only way to do that is to have everyone surrender their guns and stop shooting between gangs and fight instead. But that will never happen because suckas will always be scared to fight, so they will start shooting again.

-Godfather Nug, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire you for thinking about this problem as deeply as you have. We understand why you think of guns as protection, but are they? If so, why are so many young people laying down their lives? Guns (especially in the hands of children) make cowards FEEL brave and invulnerable, making everybody less safe (including themselves). This is why we question the connection between guns and protection. We encourage you to keep questioning what you hear, and to keep digging beneath the surface of things. Keep thinking, and keep teaching!

Life In The Hood

People said I acted like a fool,
I hung with the boys thought that I was cool,
but I didn't know about the pain I caused you,
tear drops on your eyes when I saw you,
I should of listened to you
before I stepped out the door and rolled with my crew,
but now look at me, "I'm all alone,"
but you were always there to let me know,
that you would always love me,
and you would always care for me,
and you always been there for me,
the look on your face, the memories...the moment I leave,
the memories, always find a way to tell me,
instead of being in the street, I can't sleep
I can't stop thinking about the trouble that I caused you,
hurt you so deep, to see me in the street,
the image of a uncompleted soldier, ride like a G
didn't think about the things that you told me,
all I did was smoke weed,
only thing to keep my mind at ease,
pour out some liquor for all the dead homeys,
because it's life...that's why I'm telling you the story,
so now you see life in the hood ain't all good,
life in the hood, life in the hood, ain't all good,
because it ain't all good.

-Denny, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a really powerful piece. Behind every person who thinks he or she is alone are many others who love and care about that person. And every move toward hate and pain and destruction that person takes is a jab to their heart. So love them, and love life.



A Perfect Place For Me

There's a place I would like to be, which is at the temple.
 It's a place of peace and quiet for me,
 where I can think and not worry about my life.
 It's a quiet building that just has monks and Buddhas
 sitting around and meditating.
 Stress, that's the main reason why I need and want to be
 in the temple.
 It's a place where you don't have to stress about anything
 or even worry
 about watching your back.
 You can just sit and no one will bother you
 the things in there will make you feel comfortable and
 calm.
 There are statues, pictures, and a place for you to sit all
 day comfortably.
 Here is a place to relieve stress and to feel the calm in
 your life, the temple.

-Meak, Fresno

From The Beat: It sounds like you have found your own special sanctuary. In a world as chaotic and as stressful as ours, the temple sounds like a place where the soul can reflect, be calm, and feel peace. Thank you for sharing your inspiration with us.

Today

I'm the kind of person That won't pass up the Opportunity to graffiti Across time I'm cast away in a catacomb A dead summer sunset And the smell of Turkish golds Still sit in my marrowless bones I can't describe the come down And how I thought I came up "I'm not growing up I'm just burning out" Small talk sucks There's no such thing as simple I'm sorry, but I'm not I can't regret anything It only pisses me off and pushes me on And it's okay if you don't want me around What you're looking for Is at the tips of your fingers And at the back of your mind Love should be valuable Not cheap I now have a love affair with my liver And my lungs are fat and spoiled Music forgot my name So did my best friend I need a cigarette I once was a gypsy girl Now I'm patient I grew tired of waiting But I guess it'll fall into place I'm young This is getting old I'm finger painting my days With gray and blue blobs Can you miss something you've never had? Is it really that funny? Is it really that sad? Absolute piracy I only cry when I'm mad I was born to riot Go with the flow Or swim upstream You can have all my time But you can't have my mind.

-Lizy, Solano

From The Beat: What do you miss that you've never had? It sounds like you know there's something to worth striving for, though you haven't tasted it—something you might regret not experiencing in your life. You are young, but don't wait.

RIP Dad

There's one thing I wish I could take back. It was my third birthday. My mom and I went to the doctor that morning and I was fighting with her so it took her forever to get me in and out of the doctors.

The reason I'm writing this is 'cause when we left that morning, my dad was released from prison and he got home and we weren't there.

My uncle had come over and they started fighting and my uncle killed my dad. I think if I hadn't fought with my mom, my dad would still be alive. RIP Dad, I love you.

-Goblin, Fresno

From The Beat: Your story pains us. You blame yourself, but the tragedy of your dad's death is not your fault, you were just a child. It hurts to recall such painful memories. Thank you for having the courage to share this with us.

The Special Gift

Hey Beat, this is Cherryace from JJC. Today I will be writing about my life and how I became a very good person to my mom, dad, and my brothers and sisters.

Now I was born in 1991. When my mom saw me she named me after my dad I looked mostly like him. My dad wasn't there when I was born, however my step-dad was there. Still to this day, I call him dad. The reason why I call him dad is because he was always there for me when I needed a dad in my life.

For that I am very grateful for him being there for me. So as I grow older I got to thinking, "where is my real dad?" One day when I was talking to my mom I said I want to see my real dad. She got a hold of him and sent me there so I can see him. When I got there I was very happy to see my dad but he said that I shouldn't be there because he didn't like what I had to say to him. So now he is still in my life but not that much.

Oh! I forgot to say that I was born on my grandpa's birthday. For this, I have been his favorite person. That is why I love my grandparents.

Now back to the real story. I am speaking to all of the people who is or are going through rough times right now. When I say GET ME THE HELL OUT OF HERE! (That's all for now. "Peace out" from JJC)

-Cherryace, Fresno

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your story. We realize some people never have a father and they refuse those people who could serve a fatherly role for them. We commend you for accepting your step-dad in your life and we also commend you for meeting your real father. That takes real courage. "Peace out".

Wondering

Look at me! I would never pass for a perfect bride or a perfect daughter! Maybe I'm not meant to play this part. The truth is that if I were truly to be myself I would break my family's heart.

I see myself in the mirror and wonder, who is that looking back at me! Why does my appearance show someone I don't know!

Sometimes I cannot hide who I am though I try! When will I be able to really be myself without having to worry about being judged! Will that day ever come! I feel trapped in my own skin!

When that day does come will I still be alive! The world and I may never know! But when that day does come I'll be ready! Will you?

-Lil Skittles, Solano

From The Beat: The judgment you imagine from others is often really from your self. Sometimes we can be addicted to keeping ourselves down in this way, addicted to judgmental, painful thoughts that keep you from expressing who you are, and feeling free enough to discover who you might become. We're ready, bring it!

Strange Food

Weird food I grew up eating was dog. I ate many animals people don't usually eat. My dad grew up in countryside in Asia, and I'm Korean, so I ate dog and pig's feet, ox tail, cow's ball and all that others might think it's nasty or disgusting. But when it's cooked with spices and sauce, it taste chewy and very good. In U.S. it's hard to eat a dog so I haven't ate it for a while, but when I visited Korea, I ate it and liked it. I want to try it again.

-DK, San Francisco

From The Beat: What people eat — and don't eat — often is determined by their culture. While Americans might be horrified to read that Koreans eat dog, people from India are horrified that Americans eat beef! (By the way, in the U.S., cowboys also cook and eat bull testicles. They call this dish mountain oysters...)

Don't Need It

I don't think anybody needs guns to survive this world. The only reason people use guns is because they're scared that they are not safe.

All these people thinking that it's fun playing with guns it's really stupid because violence it's not the answer to the problem. Guns could end up to death or prison, there's nothing fun or funny about that.

There should just be peace in the world so everybody could just live happily, because even if you don't die by a gun your son or daughter could.

Guns are just going to get worse and it's always going to end up in the wrong hands. It's time to stop this war with violence because it's not getting anybody anywhere. It's time for a change... -Lefty, Solano

From The Beat: We think you make a lot of sense and appreciate your point of view. Do you intend to be part of the change? Maybe the guns won't change but the people can... What are your ideas for how this could end? Guns of War

Guns kill, but sometimes with a purpose me sometimes with no purpose at all. Gangs use weapons for no reason and always are quick to pull one out. Guns are used for one thing and one thing only, death.

The main use of a gun is to protect your country. That is one good thing for a gun. Another is for hunting. There is more gun deaths from gangs than there is in any country.

-Puppy Chow

From The Beat: Maybe there's another way to solve issues, between individuals and countries. We shouldn't accept death so easily.

Stray Bullets

Man I feel like guns are necessary to have, especially if you're living in the hood like me. I'm personally from Palo Alto. I've been around guns my whole life so while growing up I couldn't wait to get my first gun.

My first time holding a gun I felt safe like I wish a ninja would test me-the first one I'm giving the blues. But now it's like so many of my patnas then got killed by the bullets it's a shame.

But that came from scary ninjas that will pull the trigger too quick instead of handling it like a man feel me? It's like the scariest ninja will take yo life in the blink of an eye. That's why I hate to say it but I keep it on me for them dudes, them that's crossing game.

-G-Weeze, Alameda

From The Beat: Thanks for your good writing on this subject. We wonder what you mean by "handling it like a man?" How do you know who will be "scary," and who will be slower to shoot?

A Real Friend

Growing up I felt having a gun was necessary. I used to tell myself "I rather get caught with it than without it." When I was thirteen I bought my first gun. I knew I didn't need it I just got it because I had the opportunity.

Then I started getting myself into situations where I needed a gun, and I actually started thinking of my gun as my best friend because a best friend will get me out of crazy situations and that's exactly why my pistol did. But now I realize my gun wasn't my best friend because a best friend wouldn't get me to go to jail.

-Davo, Alameda

From The Beat: This sounds like a rough relationship, where you didn't realize how bad the end could be until you got there. We think destructive power can not be used for good. What about your creative power, have you met that friend yet?

This Gun Violence

The first time I saw a gun I was fourteen. It was a loaded tech-nine with an extended clip. It was for protection against a rival gang. I now see guns all the time.

Fremont has gone from nice and pretty to bad and deteriorating. I had a tactical shotgun that an ATF agent sold me out of Nevada.

I wouldn't want my child to carry a gun because of the possibility of him getting locked up. I wouldn't want him to follow in my footsteps.

JJC was built for our kids, and this isn't what my child would want. I would have failed as a father if he ended up here. I would move him out of Fremont and into the hills, to get him away from the hood violence.

-Marcos, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for this excellent piece. What recommendations would you make, to help make North Fremont a more safe place for kids?

Look Past the Solitude Depart From Mutiny

I remembered how I used to say

How I was tired

And uninspired

So I took a deep breath

Of the polluted air

I'd recognize the smell

From anywhere

And in my mind

I had a placid debate

About the world's traffic

If I should give or take

Maybe I have nothing

To make loud and clear

I could find a simple place

To learn and steer

"Waterfall, nothing

can harm me at all"

The world seems more small

And my head less swole

I had to laugh

And kick my self in the

Piss out the desperation

And breathe in the recreation

"There's nothing you can

say that can't be sung"

Maybe I'll undream the cards

I was dancing among

Jump through my looking glass

And wake up to a mouthful of nights

Wake up!

So my mom could get sleep at night

I'm tired of not feeling

The music in my ears and wind in my hair

And these spoons of socialism

And already breathed in air

And I could not find what I did not seek

I was hungry after dinner

Cuz I didn't eat

I wanna see the sun

Rise and set

I wanna go LIVE!

Cuz I'm not dead yet

-Lizy, Solano

From The Beat: Good, choose life. This is an interesting poem, full of wordplay, metaphor and interesting ideas. Read a lot, it will help you. Challenge yourself in life, take risks with how hard you're willing to try, and how much you're willing to love and reveal who you are.

"Thoughts"

Whats up Beat, something I got on my mind is being incarcerated. I keep thinking to myself do I really wanna get out?

For example, the other day I wake up early going to a job or making money. In here I just wake up without a worry of any responsibility.

Also they feed me, clothe me, feed me, and look after me. I'm thinking to myself in my room was I born to myself in my room was I born to live this way? If so shall god look after me. And shall I find god one day. I once thought I believed in god but after all the negativity in my life. I gave up. I don't think I'll ever find hope again.

I sign up everyday for a priest to pray for me cause I really need it. My life is in confusion and I'm at the point in my life where I'm one bad decision away from messing up my life. Please give me advice before its to late.

To everybody out their better yourselves and show that we can still change and for better choices. Stay up keep striving be strong don't ever let anybody put you down.

-Seeking help, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think living in here is a bit like being a child forever, but without the family or joy or freedom. You get given everything, but never do any good for anyone else. And eventually you end up in real jail, where you fear for your life. It's just too easy to be good.

Raising My Daughter

I think that if somebody said something about my daughter I'm going to forget I'm a father and be another slaughterer. I will do good tho and give her everything she needs, if she ask for money I'm going to tell her to go to the backyard and cut the woods.

If she asks for a book to study or read, I'll go to the library with her and tell her to follow my lead. If she comes home late. I'ma tell her straight up I ain't giving her no breaks. You're grounded for a month. That's how I am going to do my raising if only she knew when she gets older what is she going to be facing.

-Luis, Solano

From The Beat: Your job raising her is to teach her to cope with what she will face when she's older. You have to do this little by little as she grows. You can't do it for her, you need to show her how to cope with feelings, with difficult people, how to focus and work hard on her education...and how to love others well.

Gun Violence

The first time I saw a gun, it was a handgun when I was lil' boy. The first time I held a gun it was in Boise. It was a .22 rifle. It belonged to my uncle. He let me shoot a couple of times. I was shooting at birds.

The first thing that came to mind was "Wow!" Then I said, "Can I shoot it?" and I did.

Yes, I do believe that we do need guns in our lives, in are communities. If my kid had a gun, I would have to hold it for him. I will hide it where he can't find it. But if he wanted it, he would have to ask me for it and tell me why he wants it.

If you try to stop gun violence it would only get worse. Just let it play out and later on into the future only the strong will survive. And when that happens people really shouldn't be using guns anymore.

-Monkey, Santa Clara

From The Beat: When you say that after gun violence plays out, only the strong will survive, you're telling us that all those boys who've lost their lives were weak. Do you really believe that? Does a bullet care whether you're weak or strong? Why would you hide a gun from your child? If you let gun violence play out among children then will only strong children survive? What does having and using guns have to do with being strong? Are people who refuse to handle guns weak?

Segregated and Discriminated

Sitting in the hall
 trapped in between these walls
 deprived of my freedoms
 segregated and discriminated
 are the ways I feel
 as people look down upon me
 when they don't even know who I am
 all they know is that I'm just another Mexican
 incarcerated and again I'll say segregated and
 discriminated
 are the ways I feel
 but I'm still in my prime
 living my early years
 so I can push myself to strive
 through these struggles with my head held high
 so I never show pain sorrow
 but for the third time I say it again
 segregated and discriminated
 the ways I feel
 so now the only thing to do is get educated and to help
 the young ones in the future and tell them it's never too
 late
 to want to succeed
 but I'll tell you this
 stay true to your heart
 be real to your soul

-Mc Indio, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is quite a beat and quite a message. Segregation and discrimination are hard, but they ultimately fail with a strong person. They can't tell you who you are, only how others think you are. You can always prove them wrong.

A Place for Us

There is a place. It's big and purple with white windows. It has 5 rooms. One for me and one for my sister. My room is purple and my sisters' room is yellow. That's her favorite color. This a new place we have never been before and life will be different there. It's not perfect but it's nice and we live together. It's two stories high with a white picket fence and we are happy.

-Maria, Fresno

From The Beat: That sounds very nice. We hope that some day you can find a nice place to live with your sister.

Karma's A Grinch

What's good Beat? This your boy, Yung Uso Kefi coming from the max. Today, I'm going to talk about my lil' sis.

Back in the days when I was in middle school, I used to take backpacks and steal what inside it that I can use. Well, the other day my lil' sis, she left her backpack in class for only five min. Can you believe that? Only five min! Within that five min. her stuff got took. She didn't find her stuff until one of her friends found it in the boys' bathroom.

When she told me that, I got hella mad until the point that I wanted to mess someone up. I was thinking, "Why is karma hitting my family for? And why it ain't hitting me?" That's messed up. I stopped doing all that shhh when I was in high school.

Well, I'm going to end this shot. Until next time. To the usos, stay up.

-Young Uso Kefi, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Can you imagine the reaction of all those brothers (and mothers) of the people whose backpacks you took? Probably the same as yours. That's one of the great lessons of life — that we all feel, we all hurt, we all react, and that makes us all equally human. It's a sign of your maturity that you saw that connection, and decided to make a change.

Mama

Mama I'm really sorry for the last few years
 Mama I'm really sorry I made you shed those tears
 I can't say why I do the things I do
 But I wish you really knew that I never meant to hurt you
 It eats me up inside every time I make you cry
 So I try to live right and give you one peaceful night
 But right there's a fight because the street life's got me crazy
 I know I chose to live this life I know it's not the way
 You raised me
 Are you ashamed of me mama for all that I've done
 Don't give up on me mom better days will be coming
 And got the best of me mama don't think less of me
 'Cause I know that's why your stressing on me
 See my destiny is six feet deep
 The way I live it just might be
 But until that day don't you cry for me.

-Flaco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are some beautiful thoughts. But "don't cry for me" is easier said than done. Sometimes we wish people would just not care about us, but they do. And we have to do what we can for them, and love them back.

This Situation Of Mines

Everything seems to be really complicated right now. Nothing seems to be all right. I'm talking about life. I don't know about strangers, but is this how life is supposed to be? Sure, there are the fun and happy times. Sure, when you see celebrities, famous, rich, and successful people, they have their moments. I'm sure that life isn't that, also, either.

Stress, pain, anger, anxiety, sadness, just to name a few, is something I'm going through. Facing so many problems in life. Is there a solution to it? I always wonder, is everything going to turn out to be all right?

Property tax, mortgage, bills, etc. How can you pay for all that when there's hardly any money being made? Especially with the economy being so bad, how can anyone make it today? I hope everything turns out all right. With this situation, it's even worse now with me being in here for some idiotic reason.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: Why take on the worries of an adult with adult responsibilities when you are still in your adolescence? You have enough worries about your life today without adding the burden of wondering about mortgages, etc. (Property tax and mortgage payments only apply to property owners; renters have only the burden of rent, which is much less.) Plus, Ramon, change is in the air. It may not happen in a year, or even two, but you are young, and the picture you see today will not look the same in the future. By the time this gets published, you will again be breathing free air and, we hope, putting in your hours at The Beat. Let that be your concern, and not the world's problems... yet.

Guns Don't Kill, People Do

Guns are no joke! True, but guns do not kill. The person behind the gun kill. Having a gun don't make you big, bad. People with guns get shot or killed, too. It's a lot of young people that don't know what they doin'. People that don't know what they doing should not have a gun. People could do some real stupid, like kill people that do not have any thing to do with anything.

-Black Man, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree with a lot of what you're saying, especially how guns don't necessarily protect you. But one measure of people who "don't know what they doin'" is being locked up, 'cause if you knew what you were doing, you would be able to avoid coming here! So, by that measure, nobody should have a gun. Judgment comes with experience and maturity. Young people don't yet have that, and that's why so many are dying so young!

My Homie

I would like to talk about my homie from my barrio. The reason why I would like to talk about him in The Beat tonight is because he is facing life, and I miss him. I miss him because we were pretty close to each other. There was not a time that you didn't see us kicking it at the barrio or with the jainitas.

The homie really gave me a lot of cora when we were both out and in the free world. He told me how it would be when you got locked up. Like the people you thought really cared about you, they really don't, 'cause if they did, they would write to you or accept your calls. And the people you cared less or thought that they didn't care about you actually wrote you or accepted your calls.

At first I didn't really get it, but once I got locked up, I seen what he meant. It's pretty messed up that they are trying to give him life for something he didn't do. I know he didn't do it, but the law said he did 'cause he from the barrio. I hope that homie beats his case and gets out so he can be out with his beautiful lady and family. Just so he knows that there's people out there that really care about him. And just so you know I care about you too, carnal.

I would like to thank you for all the support you gave me when we were out, and for taking care of this lonely homie when I didn't have nowhere to go.

That it for now. I hope you have a nice Christmas and a happy New Year's. Free Sleepy.

-Big Temps, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's always nice to read one person's gratitude for another person's love and support. We're sorry he's facing such serious charges, and we hope he gets out from under the possible consequences. Now it's up to you to help the next young boy who doesn't yet understand what lies ahead. It's up to you to be the next boy's teacher...

Battling With Weight

When I think of weird food, I think of Bulimia. I hate eating because when I eat I have a humongous stomach that makes me look like I am pregnant. But I am a guy! WTF! I throw up in order to maintain my small petite figure. I know that I am already under weight, but I want to stay skinny. Usually I will eat one almond, but then I will throw it up. I know what the heck? But I want to be smaller so that's what I do.

-Princess Mekal, Fresno

From The Beat: What you have Mikal is an eating disorder. And it sounds like you know this already. You shouldn't starve yourself, because you are still a kid and need food in order to grow. Your mind needs food to be smart, and your body needs it to be strong. But really, eating disorders are common. Lots of people use food to manage stress, anxiety or depression. Some people eat too much, some not enough, and some force themselves to throw up. We encourage you to talk to an adult you trust about how you're feeling, and get help before you really hurt yourself!

Guns Fired

These folks say they getting tired of all this gun violence they wish they had buttons to keep the shots quiet they say youngstas now days are a menace to society these guns wild in the streets so these folks hidden cops tryin' to stop the violence so most wired but I call it a tragedy when them guns fired

-Young Marco, Alameda

From The Beat: Nice writing Marco. Has gun violence caused tragedy in your own life? What do you think might slow it down? We appreciate your words, because it matters to hear what people think who have been affected by it.

Gangster's Get Lonely

I know it's rough, I know it's tough
 Girl, I'm trying to avoid them cuffs
 I know your last man is doing life
 And he never treated you right
 Even though you stood by his side
 A good jaina is hard to find
 They all seem to be the same
 Evil ways and no shame
 I need a gangster girl
 In my gangster world
 Baby, I'll treat you right
 Because I'm tired of them lonely nights
 And it's never been cool
 But you're a real woman and
 If you find one you'll be lucky
 Seems they always duck me

You thought this gangster got lonely
 'Cause our love was phony
 How you just sit and you phone me
 Wondering who's that holding me
 Told you before, I need support
 With this gangster life
 I want someone, no lil' girl
 What I need is a wife
 To watch my back
 When I'm out making gangster deals
 Someone to catch me when I fall
 When these homies ain't real
 I know there's something I love
 About this life I live
 But now it's gone it left me lonely

Now you know it gets lonely, here on top of the world
 I got millions of females
 But all I want is a girl to be there for me
 You know when times get hard
 And when things get rough
 She wouldn't be that far
 Me and her together
 Would face away kind of weather

God forbid, something happens to you
 With out you by my side
 I wouldn't know what to do
 Good looking girl
 I know you got my back
 The way you carry yourself
 The way you know how to act
 It's all good even though I'm just a homie from the 'hood
 I said lucky for me, you fell in love with a G
 I can't wait to get home, hope I see you soon
 Knowing night after night, up in this four-wall room
 I just sit and think, about nothing but you
 This is Temper and gangsters get lonely too.

Baby won't you ride with me
 Slide with me, get high with me
 Side with me, all night with me
 Come ride with a G
 It's the brown super baller
 Got ways to make you holler
 And everything top dollar
 From the Lex to the Juiced Impalas
 But I need a girl, not just to have.
 Someone to change up my world
 Settle down and have kids
 Even though my rep on the streets is I'm a pimp
 I need you not to trip
 While I handle my biz
 Let me do what I do
 While I hustle and grind
 Let me dip and stack my chips
 And you can have the rest of my time
 'Cause the truth: money don't bring happiness forever
 That's why I need you to come and make everything better
 So baby get to know me, show me and hold me
 Be here for me girl, and never leave me lonely.

-D, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You've got major skills with words that rhyme/ But your mindset says you'll spend more time/ In places like this, far from love/ Like the kind you describe in the poem above/ If you do what you do, if you "hustle and grind"/ Then prepare yourself to leave love behind/ Look around you, to your left and to your right/ No girls, just boys to fill your sight/ When we read your poem, this is how it seems:/ Without some changes, prepare to settle only for love's dreams...

Bangin' In, Bangin' Out

Keepin' my target in sight
 I steer clear from the light
 Hatred twisting my mind
 Turning, with no rewind
 Look deep past my eyes
 And madness you'll find
 Don't you dare look away
 It's just a gangster's play
 Your nightmare is what I call an average day
 Who woulda thought I'd be billed 15-to-life for pay
 Dead time awaiting trial, countless months I've been away
 I've never been one to dwell, so I'ma let time tell
 Straight, sit back, relax, and represent my side well

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We have such admiration for the talent you bring to whatever you write, Grumpy — and such fear for your future because your dedication to the kind of life that the system is so prepared to stop. [They don't deal well with intelligence, but they can always bring more physical power to any situation.] Anyway, we've told you all this before. When you say you represent your side well, we have to wonder what your side really is, and whether your keen intelligence is being put to use for the benefit of others, or for your own future. What else can we say?

A Foreign Life

Many people don't see now the things they do affect other people either because they just don't care or they just don't know. I personally think it's the first one you see I used to have my fun at somebody else's expense.

Now as I look back on my memories, they enrage me so much, they are like memories from a foreign childhood, memories that are not my own.

Before I did something I thought, "How much fun can I get out of this?" But now I think, "What could happen to me or someone else?" I know some people can't do that because they have not reached that level of sophistication, they are arrogantly ignorant, naïve, and tunnel vision.

Some people just don't care, but if you could take your head out of you're ass and see what you cause, would you stop? I doubt it. It's time to grow up, you make up society's imperfections!

-Derrick, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We agree with a lot of what you say, but wedon't know that sophistication is the question. Some of the most sophisticated and intelligent people are the most boneheaded. But those people will never be as good for themselves or anyone else as those who simply see others, and think of others.

I Feel Like A Chopped Up Body

Another day stressed out.
 Pain of death I'm about to blank out.
 Tired of this, sick of that
 missing some things bugged from the visions
 I face every day,
 most of the time at night. I just say
 I can't wait to die.
 I don't want to hide
 Being treated like a dog, heed by fog.
 People might as well say F - me to my face
 I knew I was 'bout to go off, B.
 But who cares?
 Nobody.
 I feel like a chopped up body.
 No to this, no to that, where is the help I ask for?
 Not the county clothes on my back.
 They make it hard on me.
 It's nothing like the streets but worse.
 You can't walk away and that's the part that hurt.
 Being part of the drama gets worse.
 Cramped in a box full of words that wants to be heard.
 Torn by the envious stares and you'll be caught by surprise.
 Open your eyes and see life come as a choice.
 It's your momma's rights to know if she wants you or not.
 You feel like hell. You've been used so many times you can't tell,
 break the spell. I'm here all alone
 counting my days can't wait to go home,
 being 'round people who give shhh less about you every day
 I'm gonna hold my head up high until that day.

-Shantell, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope you do hold it high where it belongs/at the place where words become part of songs/ where the music of sorrows meet the beats of tomorrow/ you will fight the pain and rise above/because the words your poems they show your love. Keep loving, Keep living.

Trapped And Caged

Trapped and caged—this ain't coo'
 Can't move how you want... what's the point
 You think hella much
 I hella hate the lunch
 Wishing I could go home and munch
 I'm with a bunch of messy females
 All I do is smile and strike a pose
 Now I got goals, plans, I can't run
 Tired of helpin' these smart-mouth staff get paid
 When I can be free instead
 I got to go to a group home, I'ma stick it out
 Can't take the easy route out
 It's gone be hard 'cause I'm in it by myself
 For my own wealth
 I'ma do what I got to do for me
 Ain't no "we" when it come to me
 'Cause when I do time
 All I got is my words of advice
 To my readers, do you for you
 In the end
 You all you got — not a friend!

-Lasara Lacy, San Francisco

From The Beat: If one definition of a friend is someone who won't lead you into danger, then are you being a friend to yourself? It sounds to us like you're ready to take a new path away from places like this. Maybe that's "the point" — to give you time to think of what you must do to avoid coming here. (We had to change one of your rhymes because it wasn't Beat appropriate.)

Life

Life is a battle we continue to fight
 I'm not too sure when my black people will wake up and see the light
 All this anger, violence animosity and strife ain't right
 Y'all need to stop, pay attention, and take consideration
 To what I'm saying, 'cause this generation is all about world domination
 If not now, y'all gone wish when it too late
 That you could have changed to see better days
 This lifestyle is corrupting our minds
 To the point where we ashamed to admit how we really feel inside
 If you don't know, I'm gone tell you
 That from God we can't hide, off top
 You can't look in yo' parents' eyes and lie
 They know us better than we know ourselves
 And they ache at the thought of what we do
 And God forbid they have to see us looking cold
 Wit' a tag on our toe
 Or strung out on the corner, looking for the next fix of dope
 Even doing life
 Just because the judge see color, and gave you three strikes
 So have fun while you can, and keep riding yo' bike
 Keep staying true
 Just kick it and do you
 Reclaim yo' life
 And tell all the people putting you down, no copy, write

-Kirstin, San Francisco

From The Beat: From this it's clear that you have awakened and seen the light. That means, of course, that sometimes you have to put having fun to the side in order to move yourself closer to your goals. What are your dreams for the future, and what is your plan for achieving them?

It's Like The Fourth of July

Today I'm gonna talk about gun violence. Nowadays people are getting shot for any and everything, if you look at someone wrong, they will shoot you in broad daylight. And we all know bullets don't have names and the people that shot the guns don't have aim. See where I'm from in Hayward, California, the heart of the Bay it's like the Fourth of July every day Cause there is so many gun shots, see when you're from where I'm from a ninja will get smoked over five dollars or a dirty look.

You see people don't kill people. Ninjas with guns kill people. Sometimes the ninjas with guns kill innocent people because they try to rob them and it goes bad. But I'm out for now.

-Lil' P, Alameda

From The Beat: You do a great job here of laying out the problem. It's ugly times in The Bay, and a lot of people get hurt — it's tragic and it's destroying the people we love. But in the part of your piece that we had to cut you talked about your own role in the problem. Do you really think carrying a gun will make you safer? And what if it's one of your bullets that takes down a bystander on the street? Or makes a grandmother cry?

What A Gun Can Do

A gun can do a lot of damage
 A gun can cause life to be taken away
 A gun can cause you to be in the wrong place
 There are thousands of people that die from guns just in Fresno.
 People need to just put the guns away already.

-Entay, Fresno

From The Beat: Well said Entay. But things well said are easier than having them well done. How can you help people put the guns down in your own community?



RIP Lil' Will

RIP to my cousin Lil'Will
 he was only fourteen when he got stabbed and killed
 he was never the bad type now he was good
 always went to school never posted in the hood
 until one night on August 19
 he got stabbed and killed by the enemies
 That night I got arrested but he got killed later on
 and when I called my Mama she told me Lil' Will was gone
 I was shocked ninja man I didn't feel right
 I'm like how I get arrested and he got killed the same night?
 That's one thing that I gotta live with
 why the enemies take him, man he was only a kid
 It's hurt'n me to say that my lil' cousin gone
 that's why I'm always say'n his name up in a song
 He got killed down the street from where I got arrested
 At least I know he's in his casket man well rested
 and when it was time to put in work he would always say never
 that's why he's my lil' cousin and I'll miss him forever.

-Lil' Rolo, Alameda

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss, and sorry for the loss of this young life. You are right he was too young! We think he'd appreciate this tribute to him, to his life. We wonder what was going on that night?

Confessions of A Bullet

You speak you just talk
 And talkin' is just words
 when you is just a little baby sayin' yo' first three words
 People talk just for fun and act hard with a gun
 Poppin' caps in the air and you the first person to run.
 Blood spills, bodies drop, thinkin' you really hard
 Now well them ninjas straight soft,
 Playin' they best friends for straight fools.
 And I knock 'em down like balloons
 I'm the only one who comes out like - bang. Bang. Boom.
 Boom.
 Hit this hit that I ricochet spin.
 And do all that.
 I'm silent I'm loud I'm whatever not proud
 I can't be stopped because the trigger let me go,
 I come in all shapes and sizes and I'm ready to kill some mo'
 Guess who I am, it's not hard to tell,
 I'm not like how it was no more, naah
 Never that they just don't make no more
 When I'm comin' from that gat.

-Lil' Quan, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece hits like a bullet too, straight and sure to the heart. And telling the story of the streets from the point of view of a bullet tells gives us a whole new perspective on how meaningless street cruelty really is. We are looking forward to publishing more of your outlook!

My Mom And Girl Crying

Yeah, you know who this be. This Delvonta. I been in here like a few months. I don't know what they tryna let a thug out. I am stressed out because they talking 'bout some bs how I can't see my wife. I miss her so much it's not funny. Thinking 'bout her every day.

Every time my mom come to my court date and I don't get out, mom leave out crying. That stuff made me feel bad. And every time I get my phone call, I call ma girlfriend. I know for fact she be crying every time I get off the phone.

Fo' all you dudes that got a chance out there, you betta take advantage of it because I thought life was a game before, but people learn from their mistakes. So all I can tell you is keep your head up, do yo' time and get out. I'm gore

-Delvonta, San Francisco

From The Beat: Not all people learn from their mistakes, so it's good to read that you have learned from yours. What changes do you plan to make when you touch down so that you don't leave your girl and your mom in tears again?

Don't Go There Dad

Why you yelling at me
 Don't go there Dad
 Why you leave me?
 Don't go there Dad
 Why you disrespecting me
 Don't go there dad
 Why did you do drugs in my face
 Don't go there Dad
 Why did you go to jail
 Don't go there Dad
 Why you tryin' to tell me what to do
 Don't go there Dad

-Quilla Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: We sure hope this poem comes with a Part 2, and we hope you share your story with the Beat - and that you decide to "go there," because we know you have an important story to tell.

Have You Ever?

Have you ever had to steal so you can eat dinner?
 Have you ever had a teacher say y'all never be a winner?
 Have you ever watched yo' best friend shoot himself in the head?
 Have you ever gotten a call saying someone you love is dead?
 Have you ever wished that you could die
 Have you ever been so sad that you couldn't cry?
 Have you ever had a big problem that just kept getting bigger?
 Have yo ever had yo' heart stop for drinking too much liquor?
 Have you ever been in reality, but still in a dream?
 Have you ever done something good, but still felt like leaving the scene?
 Have you ever seen your mom cry so much that you wanted to kill?
 Have you ever been healthy but still felt real ill?
 Have you ever?

-No Name, Alameda

From The Beat: With each line of this poem you bring us a little deeper into an understanding of what it means to love and suffer, to make mistakes, to mourn. All we can say is that we hope you never heard what you say from a teacher – because it's not true! In this poem you show that you can be a winner – you have heart, wisdom and something to teach as well.

Gun Violence, Hurting People, Helping People

I have never seen a gun before other than a police officer that had a gun. Guns, I feel, are dangerous and I feel police should only have them.

I do not like when people talk about other people and hurt their feelings. People all have feelings (sometimes they may not act like they do.) I also do not like when you are in a relationship and the other person apparently "loses feelings" about you and leaves you there.

If someone is acting strange, I would worry about them and try to help them and make sure they will be normal. I feel that I helped people emotionally by getting their mind off things. My friend was brokenhearted, so I took her mind off things.

-Samantha, San Francisco

From The Beat: Samantha, maybe your Beat facilitator forgot to tell you to write about only one topic. The reason for that is when you write about all the topics, you can't get in more than a few sentences, and we won't publish pieces that are too short. (That's why we pushed three of your pieces together, so that all of them could see the light of day.) You are too good a writer to give us only two or three sentences. Next time, think about the one topic you want to write about, then write as much as you can about it, with examples, explanations, and details.

Fight With Your Fists

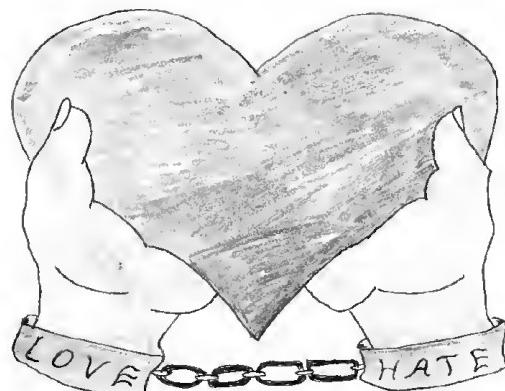
I think people who have guns are weak because they can't resolve an issue peacefully. People who have guns should drop the guns and fight with their fists.

I hope that people who have guns don't use them in a way that they take somebody's younger or older brother from their life. People should think about the victim's family and how sad they would be: The parents would be thinking about how their son or daughter is dead the parents would not be able to sleep knowing that their kid is no longer with them.

-Elliot, Alameda

From The Beat: Compassion is the ability to feel what others are going through, to truly care about another persons suffering or pain. That's what you're talking about there, about how important it is that we learn to have compassion with each other. This is the message of Jesus, Gandhi, Reverend Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama... do you feel that compassion is in all of us?

THE BEAT



WITHIN

Life

Life is pain
 Pain is death
 People are fake
 Fakes are dumb.
 People talk a lot
 But don't do anything
 I know I am tired
 Of talking to much shhh.
 People say they want to fight
 But they expect others to help them
 They can't just stand up for themselves.
 I want people to just shut up
 And live their own lives.
 People think I am down
 But I am not.
 People judge me for my looks
 Or by the way I talk.
 But if they really got to know me
 They would see that I am cool.
 People always want to start things
 And yes I start them too sometimes.
 When we all cry
 People want to laugh at us
 And it's not right
 I wish people could
 Be in my shoes
 And see what this life is about.
 People believe I will be
 Locked up for life
 But they don't know anything.
 Life is everything
 You can lose it for shhh
 You didn't even do.

-Bethany, Fresno

From The Beat: Bethany has been writing to us for sometime, because she has been in the JJC for a while now. She's right though. People need to stop judging others and worry about themselves. But this includes you too Bethany.

Changing My Hate

In these four walls
 I can't think at all
 My mind is filled with negativity and hate
 Seems like that's my fate
 My mind is so dark I don't know no light
 But my heart so bright it just urges to fight
 I remember thinking back on the decision I made
 All the good times starting to fade
 I'm tryin' to get back on track but my wolf pack
 Keeps holding me back
 But I'm letting lose and letting go
 My mind is riding with the positive flow
 Instead of kicking it with the dudes I stay home
 And help my mom's bring up the food
 I'm on my way back to the positive climb
 But first I gotta knock off this six months group home time.

-Vietnamese Kid, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a great poem describing your trials and tribulation. Change ain't easy, and it doesn't come over night. But you can at least try and give it your best shot. Positive thinking will bring positive outcomes, you just gotta have some patience.

Momma

Momma I'm tired of seeing you cry,
 momma I'm tired of seeing tears in your eyes.
 Sorry for all the hurt I put you through,
 sorry for doing all the things you told me not to,
 I know you never thought I'll be this way,
 I'm sorry for a hurtful things I say,
 just know from this day things won't be the same,
 'cause momma I'm sorry for all your pain,
 if I could go back in time, all your pain would be mine,
 momma I'm sorry I gotta do all this time,
 momma I'm gonna stop all your crying.

-Guero, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a beautiful expression, and a solemn vow. It takes a lot to see how what you do affects others, and how what you can do can help them. I hope you can do better for your mom, and I hope she knows you are trying.

Gun Violence Hurts

The first time I saw a gun was like two weeks ago because my cousin had a gun on him. I seen him take it out, but it was kind of small and silver.

I never held a gun before in my life, probably a bee bee gun or an air soft gun but never a real one. When I think of guns I think of killing and shooting. So that's why I do not like guns.

But the real reason is, it was like two weeks before I was born my dad had died over a gun. But nobody shot him. What I heard he thought he had it on safety and I guess he was playing with it, and then he accidentally shot himself.

I don't like guns because they can get you shot or killed but sometimes you need to protect your family. No, I do not want my child to pack a gun never, but I would want him or her to protect their self. No one can stop gun violence, but you can stop selling guns. But that's not going to happen.

-Morris, Alameda

From The Beat: It's hard because sometimes it does seem like the gun violence won't stop. We can't get the guns off the streets, but at least we start with ourselves and try to educate our peers. Why are kids killing kids on the streets? We all live in poverty and no one is better than the next man. Why do people focus their energy so much on trying to bring the next man down instead of trying to bring your self up?

The First

I was the first of my family to join a gang at first I just kick it at the park just playing handball affiliating then. I see how they were how they got down and I liked it. The streets were like a drug and I'm an addict. I can't stop. I never thought twice why I choose this life. Nothing comes between me and the family that I choose.

-Lil' Silent G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's good that you feel a connection to people and genuinely care about your "family." But you are ultimately responsible for what you do. They don't make you do anything, and I hope you can take your love for them and do some good.



My Life Has Changed

Well it's been a month and a half since I've been here. It's my first time here but I feel like I've been here for months. Watching people come and out, giving advice to new people. I feel like a veteran in the game. I waited 3 weeks for my 1st court date, which was my release date.

Once that day came I found out my mom changed her mind and decided to send me to a group home for 6 months. I was totally crushed and cried bitter tears that day, at the fact that it was only the beginning, at the fact that it was my mom's decision.

I hated her for that, but not for long. I'm a changed man now. She visited me constantly and told me why she made that decision, not because she is a messed up person or she knew how I'd feel. But she did it to make me a better person.

I haven't yet started the program but already in my mind I'm a changed person. I'm anxious to show that to my mom, myself, and the world that.

-Lito, Alameda

From The Beat: That's great that you have decided to change your life. Sometimes parents make decisions that you might not like, but it's for your own good. We all have to do things that we might not like. Like for example, waking up early, but you have to wake up early to go to school or to go to work. You'll learn. We all make mistakes you must learn.

Mama Dry Your Eyes

With only one life to live I got to give it all I got.
 With all the chances I get I still be running from the cops.
 I'm sorry for all the drama mom.
 I know I need to stop.
 And I know that it's killing you, but you're telling me it's not.
 I know that it is so.
 Don't lie 'cause it's a fact, and it's more than just a chip.
 I'm like a rock on your back.
 Don't trust the rock in your sack, 'cause it's killing you slowly.
 And it's killing me more because you're more than my homie.
 You're the one that gave me birth.
 You're the one I call mommy.
 You're the one that taught me words.
 You're the reason I'm walking, and it's hard for me - talking,
 but I can tell you in a rhyme that I'm sorry for the stress and all the tears
 in your eyes. So, if you need me for anything mama, you know I'm here to give you comfort for the stress.
 You know that I care, and you'll never be lonely 'cause I'm always near.
 So, mama, just dry your eyes 'cause your son's right here.

(Chorus)

Mama, dry your eyes because your son's right here.
 I know it's hard to smile but when the rain is clear,
 you're gonna dry your eyes.
 We gonna make it through, because you love me forever,
 and I love you!

-Big Keno, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Hey Big K - nice lyrics. It's true that sometimes song lyrics or just a hug can say things we'd like to put into other words, but for some reason, just can't. Now then, do these lyrics have a melody? We think the sweetest song you could ever sing to your mama would be in good actions, good behavior, rather than words. And that, Keno, is a tune we make up day by day, every day of our lives.

War Zone

It's a real life war zone
 Ninjas getting killed
 From left to right killing
 In broad day light
 Not just at night
 When they say funk on sight
 They ain't lying
 They willing to give up they life for the next
 Cause all people care about is respect
 I can understand being on the street
 To get money for your family
 But some people take it to the next level
 Killing before hey hit a young teen
 This shhh is real
 Not only thugs but civilians got to keep that steel
 'Cause they no if they slipping they can get killed.

-Lil' Charlie, Alameda

From The Beat: Nice poem as it is sad but yet truthful of what really goes on in the streets. It's hectic out there in the streets, 'cause everybody is riding around looking for trouble strapped up. Sometimes it is hard and makes you wanna pack one too. But how can you get away from all the negativity? How can you bring it to the attention to the leaders in your community? Something needs be done, to try and make things right. Where can you start?

My Goodbyes

Hey, what's really good Beat. Today is Thursday. Soon I'm finally leaving this place. When released, I'll have been here 180+days.

Well, let's see.... by being here we learned a lot, but I also had many struggles - from the usual drama that happens in the girls' units to missing my wonderful mother, my best friend, and my familia. But most of all, the fear and worry I have for my little brother who is in here right now.

I've cried many nights and I'm not ashamed to admit it. I can't contemplate all the tears I tasted as I watched the days pass by, watched the seconds slide by. Having the minutes pass but having it feel like an hour.

God granted me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change and the ability to change the things I can.

To anyone who is reading this, just keep your head up. Be strong. Change your ways. Don't do it for anyone else. Do it for yourself. "Life isn't measured by the amount of breaths we take, but the moments that take our breath away." Cherish every moment like it's your last.

I wish everyone of you nothing but the best and hope your time flies. And to my roommate - when you read this, don't trip. I'm watching my brother for you until you get out. LOL.

I'd like to thank all staff who have helped me cope with the struggles I had to face.

To Ms. Elliott, even though sometimes you were mean and kicked me off detail, I could never stay mad at you.

To Mrs. Fanjando, you were the first staff I met when I came to this unit. Thank you for always being honest with me and telling me to just focus on getting a job and staying away from drama.

To Mrs. Avalos, you were like the mom on the unit. I thank you for all the advice you gave me and those bomb ass tacos you made that one time, and just for everything.

To Mrs. Barnes you're one of my fav staff. I always looked forward to you coming in and telling your jokes (brown chicken-brown cow) hahaha.

To Mrs. Vera and Mr. Young, I loved when you two worked together. You always made it as fun as possible in here, and always brought us some kind of goodies each week... best bunk, slushies etc... Thank you for all your support, your patience with helping me find a job, and helping me study for my tests. You'll forever have my undying gratitude. To Mrs. Mamirea, my favorite staff, thank you for everything, for always finding the time to talk to me. You gave me advice and thanks for just being you.

To the GR staff - Cornardo - you're the best. You crack me up. You always made me laugh when I was doing detail with you. Thanks Princess Cornardo.

Finally, last but not least - Mrs. Perez. Thank you ever so much for everything you've done. You never judged me. You always acknowledged me and always asked how I was doing, and gave me words of encouragement and let's not forget - whenever I needed to talk to you, you would call me down.

Thank you so much. To all my staff - you all made a huge impact on my life and helped me understand things from a different perceptive. You'll all hold a place in my heart. I know it sounds cheesy, but it's true. I hope we see each other on the outs - like at one of my jobs. I wish you all the best in life. That's my good bye. Always - loyalty, trust, respect.

-Christina, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a gracious and generous and wonderful goodbye to the many people who have helped you. We are happy to print it.

Loyalty and Respect

When I hear the words loyalty and respect I think of my family and Mom. Because for the fact that I'm loyal to my family and I have respect for my mom.

Loyalty means a lot to be able to trust or have trust in someone is sometimes strange because you never know if the person is going to snitch- so all my loyalty goes to my family and they're loyal to me as well and my respect as well... But most for my mother I give her my most loyalty and respect because I can always trust and count on my Mom for everything.

So what does loyalty and respect mean to you?

-Young J

From The Beat: Loyalty depends on trust, and it sounds like the snitching factor has eroded the trust—making loyalty beyond family difficult. The gang enhancement laws have made the time people can get huge, and when folks are faced with that they snitch more often. It makes sense to only be loyal to those you trust.

Gun Violence

I think guns are a bad thing for the world and should not be used for bad deadly force or just not to be used at all.

Every year 100,000's of people who matter die, or lose their child to gun violence, but for what reason?

What if guns was never made? I wonder how many people would be alive, how many families would be feeling right now. But most people like to just play around with guns and then a lot people get hurt or even die. Then that person going to be sitting in jail for the rest of his life wondering why all of that happened, or why that person even had to die.

-Jerrone

From The Beat: You're right, gun violence leads to a lot of deaths and a lot of broken families. How have guns been a part of your life? It's easy to talk about violence being bad in the world, but what about gun violence in your own community, your own life?

Guns Are Apart Of Me

Well to me having a gun is an always, to me a gun is like a limb. If I didn't have one it's like I felt like if something was missing. All my life I've been around guns so to me it's like a gun is like a tool I carry with me everywhere. I wouldn't know what to do if guns weren't invented.

-Michael

From The Beat: Sadly, you're not alone in having guns be a part of your life since childhood - it's a very common way to grow up in certain parts of the world. However, in other parts it's not so common. Do you think you would still feel lost without your gun on you if you were in a place where no one else had a gun?

Gun Violence And Loss

Man, let me tell you about these guns. Man, guns ain't cool because everybody is quick to pick one up. From my perspective I think sucka ass ninjas gotta pull a gun out.

I play with guns but I just don't pull them out on people.

I've lost too many ninjas to gun play. Rip Burger, Rip Mike, Rip Paco, man this list can go on and on. Some ninjas gotta carry a gun 'cause of so much dirt they have done in these Oakland streets. Man, with all these guns on the street it's not safe for anyone.

-Droopy

From The Beat: Losing people you care about to guns is really an eye opening thing. So many people see guns and have guns, but if you haven't seen the damage they can do, you can never really know what that's like. We're sorry you've lost people in your life to gun play, and hope that you learn from your experiences.

Dozen

We could play, we could roast, we could joke, but if you put my moms in it that's yo butt Mr. postman.

Speak Up

Sometimes you gotta speak up for the people that don't have their own voice. Everyone wants to be heard, but sometimes can't speak up for themselves. Sometimes it gets to the point where I'll take that step to speak up for someone else especially if they're right.

RIP Dez

Rest I Paradise Desmond Thomas aka D-West. I miss you bruh. I'm a shine for you big bruh. It ain't no secret.

-Mackin Nam

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. We wonder when you have taken that step to speak for someone silenced? Why don't some people have their own voice?

Guns In My Life

In my life I saw a gun when I was 8 years old I was at my dad's house in my dad's room. I had pulled the cep out, put the bullet in the gun, but I didn't touch it again because I seen my friend shoot himself when he play with a gun.

I myself play with guns like people trying to shoot me or trying to shoot my love one for my safety. I stay with guns for my life.

-Jovante

From The Beat: You've seen guns since you were young, it's something you're used to seeing, but you still feel like they're a bad thing unless used for safety. Why do you think you feel this way, but so many of peers play around with guns?

Joking

I don't think it's okay to joke all the time. Like when people joke about people's family member, like people talk about people's mom or dad or grandma, cause you never know what going on in their life. Like, their parents could be dead, you never know. That why you don't talk about people's family.

For example, I once told a girl that her mom was a crack head, a dope fiend, she started crying and I felt hella bad for her because it was true.

-Rashaud

From The Beat: You make a really good point. It's always a good idea when joking around to keep in mind that people may take offense or may be upset by what you say.

What Can I Do

What can I do, what can I say, I want to just get high and float away.

All these eyes see is a world of gray.

All pain no love

police don't give a ..., you just another ninja.

To them we all look the same

sitting in my cell in this little room like a living hell.

Think that juvenile hall can't be my God given call, get released, on the corner, smoke flowing through my nose round the block got hoes walking on the stroll.

Little girls only thirteen years old, out there, catching more than a cold.

Sooner or later this hood life gone get old, but for now I am stuck in the flow.

-Young Gray

From The Beat: Sounds like you don't agree with a lot of what goes on in your community, or even a lot of what you do yourself. When will it get old? What needs to happen for you to want to get out bad enough?

Gun Play

Sometimes gun play is dangerous but most of the time it is necessary. In my life we play that game a lot, some people say it's crazy but for me it's just what it's like.

I didn't have much of a choice, my cousin was shot at the age of 17 and retaliation is a must where we came from, so I had to pick up a gun, do my dirt and now I can't stop using a pistol.

-Gunner

From The Beat: Revenge can be a very dangerous road to go down. If you retaliate with violence, you know there will be retaliation against you with more violence. Where does the cycle end? Can you think of a situation where it would be worth it to not take revenge and end the cycle?

Don't Go There

I don't play when it comes to my fam. It's bad business when you cross that line with me.

I got too much love for my family and I can't stand to see anybody in the fam to be hurt. If you put my family in danger, I'll make your whole life miserable. Don't go there.

I love my family more than words can explain. It's just that simple.

- Slick

From The Beat: Family is so important, we agree, and we are glad you have a strong family. We agree too that it's important to protect and stick up for you blood family, but we took out the parts of your piece that were about activities that would land you back in jail. We are sure that your family loves you too, more than words could say, and would prefer you safe and outside, unless you're talking about your street family, which in truth could care less if you are locked up or not.

Don't Go There

One thing I don't understand about some dudes in jail is why ninjas be so goofy in here and take everything for a joke. Shhh be serious! And enough be enough, sometimes dudes in here, ninjas don't be always tryin' to be capping or roasting ninjas be more focus on getting out and they court day and not getting more paper work on them.

So some heads up advice for you minors and youngsters, be easy man, do something productive with your lives when y'all get out 'cause we ain't down forever. I got a release day one day even if it ain't soon I ain't trippin'. I will be out one day.

-M

From The Beat: You're advice to others is to be productive and stay out of trouble, but you end by saying you're gonna go right back to doing what you did to end up in trouble. How can you expect people to listen to your advice if you don't follow it yourself? It's time to start practicing what you preach!

Raise Your Hands In The Air

Yeah guns ain't cool so that's why you suckas need to put them down an get them hands up an fight like men 'cause it ain't cool to shoot that thang every time you have a problem. If I got a problem with somebody I ain't just gone bust they shhh we can always get 'em up before I shoot you.

If you harm my family then I'm really gone bust yo ass 'cause that ain't cool. But remember before you shoot somebody your size or your age put yo' gun down and get them hands up blood real talk though.

-Baby James

From The Beat: While guns definitely make the stakes higher, hand violence can be just as deadly. Do you feel that hand violence is less dangerous? How do you feel about working out problems with words instead - can nonviolence be effective?

Legit Paper

What's up wit the Beat? The day I get released I'm gone try to come up on some paper. But I'm gone try to do it the legit way so I don't have to hustle to get it or rob.

In the future I will like to have my own business so I can put my ninjas on with a job with cool pay and so I can be my own self boss. I want a fat crib, that new Lexus or new Mercedes on 4s. I want Stacy Adams three piece suits, coogie, evisu, and Jordans in my closet.

I want to come through the hood shining. Me and my ninjas we all gone be shining and the police gone hate because they can't knock us. they might catch us with some dro or toasta but can't do shhh cause I'm gone have prescriptions for mines.

-Lano

From The Beat: What kind of business do you plan to create? Can you use your time to learn about business and making your own business, and get yourself all ready for when you are released?

Release

Today I'm going to talk about my release.

Well, on December 4th I got court with me and two other co-parts. Well yeah, I just hope we get released because I've been here almost 3 months and I think it's time for us to be released.

Hopefully everything goes good and we get released

-Chavita

From The Beat: We wish you freedom as well. What do you think you've learned from your three months locked up? Anything that will be useful to you in your life on the outs?

Pain in My Life

The pain that I've been holding in my life ain't no joke. I've lost so many people in my short life of living and I'm only seventeen years old. My world has been a living hell, it feels like I've been to hell and back but everybody I talk to don't understand where I'm coming from they try and say "I feel where you're coming from" but that shhh don't phase me.

Sometimes I get the feeling my own mother don't understand me and she's my mother. People just don't know what I've been through. I had to hustle on my own since I was twelve years old walked out on my moms. Sleepin' in the rain for two nights till my play brother took me in so when I tell you that you don't understand me don't get mad.

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: You're right, no one understands exactly what you've been through or how it all adds up over your lifetime. We have all had some really hard times, and understand how difficult it feels to make it through them, however everyone's situation is different. What do you wish people understood about the way you feel?

Gun Violence Will Never Stop

Gun violence is never going to stop especially in my hood in East Oakland. We have too many gang-bangers and drug-dealers so it won't never stop. I mean we can have less killing but it ain't going to stop. Really now they ain't playing with nobody. 'Cause sometimes you really need a gun but at the same time you don't. Me, I'd prefer to get caught with one rather then get caught sleeping without one.

-Ghost

From The Beat: Do you think the violence would stop if there were jobs and education opportunities available to those gang-bangers and drug dealers? Or if they were all swept up and locked up? Tell us some potential solutions to the problems you describe here....

Q-Vole Beat

It's that vato Gilberto coming out of Max 2. Today I'm going to write about gun violence. Well I find flaws in gun violence and I see how some people don't like it, and don't get me wrong I don't like it either.

But sometimes you gotta handle stuff and a lot of people choose to do it by using a gun. And I've lost a lot of my homies to gun violence and right now I'm here for a gun related charge and I'm waiting to get transferred to CYA, so I guess guns and gangs will never lead you to good places, but I had to learn that the hard way...pues I'm out orales Beat.

-Gilberto

From The Beat: We hope some that read this can learn from what folks like you write, instead of having to learn the hard way themselves. Use your time well Gilberto, prepare for the rest of your life.

Gun

is the reason why I am here. It was the first time in my life that I'd ever seen, touch, had , and felt the fear of owning a gun. Clearly, after what this gun had done to my life, I would never touch a gun again. This gun taught me a lesson that I will remember all my life.

-Brock

From The Beat: We definitely agree that guns teach often through serious harm, or death. The power to destroy is not as beneficial to one's life as the power to create. It's an important choice to make: destroy or create? If you could feel the power of being able to create your life... what would you make of it?

Change

I'm in her stressing like mad at this weak system, it makes me hella mad I'm in here for some bunk shhh that I didn't do. I hope that when I get out I am gonna do better and that I will find the way to change my life and do better because my Mom waiting on me when I get out.

-Big Body

From The Beat: We hope you can turn this whole situation around so that you can make your life better. You can do it if you decide that's what you want, and take it step by step, day by day.

Speak Up

I'm tired of this shhh I wish this shhh would stop I can't wait till I get out

I pray that I go Pro and go to the NBA and have kids wearing my shoes
and headbands. I want to live the real life, be rich and have a million crib
you feel and dig me?

-Swisher

From The Beat: Good luck with that!! Practice, practice, discipline, take care of yourself, make good choices and work hard for your dreams.

Family

You don't joke about anyone that is dead that I was close to. My Dad was close to me so if someone jokes about him I get angry. I don't get angry if someone doesn't know my dad and in general just says "yo Dad is so stupid..." I get angry if someone is getting at him sideways. If you don't get at him it's fine.

-Kyle

From The Beat: This makes sense because it would be like someone disrespecting something that means a lot to you, and not being considerate about your Dad or what has been meaningful in your life. How do you respond?

Power

Violence will take over the world whether or not people like it. No guns, all it will do will make people fight and stab. But through all the pain, America as our people will survive whatever comes to us because we have the power.

-Dj

From The Beat: What you write is a little confusing. You say that violence will "take over the world", which ultimately means we'll all fail, but then you also say that Americans have the power to survive. These two things seem like they can't both happen. How will Americans survive - what is this power we have?

Gun Violence

To me guns are noth'n unless one is pointed at me. I'm not scared of them but they are no joke, they are noth'n to play with. I have many friends that died from guns, one of my homies just died...RIP Lil' Pooh.

Guns is mostly the problem in the hood-if there were no guns there wouldn't be as much killings, that it is now matter a fact it really wouldn't be no killings not exactly no killings but with no guns it wouldn't have as many robberies... but I don't know a lot of people do robberies without guns but guns is a big part of the violence.

It wouldn't be no bank robberies so sho and it would be better in the hood because nobody would have to worry about somebody comin' through shoot'n-we would probably lose more people to jail instead of guns. But gun violence is a big part in this society. Gun violence is bad, this just what my opinion is.

-Young Boobie

From The Beat: Life as you describe it sounds so rough, it seems like people get lost to guns or jail. What do you plan to do when you are released so that you aren't in this danger of losing your life one of these ways?

Crazy Piece

I went to the train station to go through the desert seen a lot of sand and the ride was soft just like a whisper

The ride took all evening and the train was steel
I loved my trip to Venus it was just so real.

-Lil' Rolo

From The Beat: We like your writing, Rolo. Do you read a lot too? Read and write as much as possible while you have the time...

Don't Give Up

I know that it's impossible to get these guns off these streets

but it's worth trying so go for it
even though you ain't going to get far.

-Fat Boy

From The Beat: We agree with you, not sure what to do, but have to try. One person at a time. What about you? Do you plan to carry a gun?

New Foods

I hate eating food that I don't eat.

Me if I never ate it I won't eat.

I never ate menudo, tofu, sushi or raw fish.

I have ate pig feet.

-M

From The Beat: How can you learn new things if you don't try it? We agree there are certain things we'd also say no to, but gotta stretch a little to grow.

Swagger Like Me

Intro:

Who says Latinos can't spit like this. I'm Salvadorian Mexican and Puerto Rican.

Verse 1:

My lyrical capabilities show I got extraordinary swag
hits keep droppin' while them suckas lag
never the type to boast 'cause my rap sheet brags
wanna know my regiment, just look at the SF hat
snap into focus, play close attention
I been hotter than the temperature up in the kitchen
look through The Beat Within and someone's missin'
stick out like a sore thumb, it's me I'm mentionin'
been sharper than a gold dagger of all metal
thirty-five is the limit but I step on the pedal 'cause life ain't
just a caramelo
should give you an IEP just to make you feel special
planted the seeds in the right soil
got to turn down the heat to make sure I don't over boil
ha, these cowards make me giggle
I stay higher than clouds you can tell by the way I whistle

Chorus - repeat

Who in The Beat Within got swagger like me
Swagger like me
Swagger like me

Verse 2:

With these handcuffs on, look how I shine on the wrist
took the roof off so now my car topless
hydraulic pumps left an' right my car switch
turn off an' on but don't blow the circuit
look in The Beat Within and check my sway
now they checking my rep checkin' how I rap
checkin' my class, checkin' how I smash
I roll through slow an' then I gas
so off the top take it to the extreme
we livin' to die just like Notorious B.I.G.
Ain't no don but they still kiss the ring
y soy lil savage Luchiano an' the fire I bring
like an elevator I'm climbin' to the top
bring the fire 24/7, spinning like a clock
interchangeable wrist on the watch
time to scat 'cause there go the cops

Chorus - repeat

Verse 3:

These suckas is counterfeit
focused on the nonsense
I'm focused on the politics, look how I got 'm sick
it's still irrelevant how I got this much stamina
we can handle ya, that's how we damage ya
same color flag as the stars and stripes
it ain't about height, it's if the heart is right
if it got the right size then we got the right theory
can you hear me, I said beef, we got plenty
had to switch it up 'cause them haters' envy
I'm like AK, I spit verses 'till I'm empty
pop another verse, bars I got plenty
lyrics are right, just like every one with me
I move swiftly, fast, like lightening
intelligent gangsta, just check my writing
we live the life while Marks stay lying
while the real stay true and keep on surviving.

- Lil' Savage

From The Beat: We agree that words are powerful and that expressing oneself is important. We are glad that The Beat is a place for you to swag. How can you be helping others to have such confidence with words?

San Francisco

Intro: Everyone thinks San Francisco is just glitter and glamor, but let me show you the dark side of my city.

I am from the city where the Giants play and which the Niners call home

Welcome to San Francisco

Where every block is a turf and every hood is a district
got rid of all John Does, so no one is missin'
bullets stay whizzin' and the city stay hot
been crackin' since RBL posse and before Mr. C. got shot
Gangsta Flea gone, lil duce gone
the Goodfelons still out but now it's my turn to be on
black an' brown repin' Salvadorian Puerto Rican bomber
seventeen reasons I got to take this game farther
bullies with fullies like I'm Guce an' mess
the power and the pain gone so what'll happen next
take a ride with me down these deadly alleys
where real recognize real and sight is real badly
unresolved murders take in this seven-point-five mile
long city by the bay
connected by two bridges to still collect pay

Welcome to San Francisco

the city that doesn't sleep, where there's more than sightseeing
more than just Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge
dirty water represents the 49ers and Giants

Prisoner of war up at the Presidio

take the 38 then the 22, you landed in the Fillmore
home of Messy Marv, San Quinn and JT
City boys ain't no punks, we out to money
hop back on the 22 you just landed in the Mission
take the bus to my hood to see how I'm livin'
the district full of life we call it the Latin Ghetto
cholos an' zootsuiters on our murals, we ready
then backstreets stay faulty the frontline been gutted
forty posted daily on the corner
hop on the 48, you just landed in Portero Hill
go a lil' farther, you just landed with one of the real
Hunter's Point, that murky island where it's even faultier
on the strip

3rd Street where they stay in scrappers to gas break an' dip
hop on the Muni train until you pass 7-11
hop on the 9x, you just entered hell, not heaven
that's them projects you enter and exit with caution
Sunnydale stay hot so only a few will walk in
stay on that bus you just landed in the Outer Mission
Geneva St. hop on the 29 Muni
slide through Lakeview where they are known to act rudely
sue me not likely just keep goin' 'til you hit the Sunset
that's them avenues where it's hardly ever sunny
North Beach down to Japantown known as the Richmond
keep on going downtown 'til you pass car dealerships
you just hit the Tenderloin, a place real known
drug addicts and ex-cons and prostitutes galore

Welcome to San Francisco

the city that doesn't sleep where there's more than
sightseeing
more than just Alcatraz an' the Golden Gate Bridge
dirty water represents the 49ers and Giants

- Lil' Savage

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your intimate knowledge of SF. Certainly not what the tourists have in their tour books. We'd bet that you know even more about SF that's not in the tour books, including some fantastic, fun, rare, beautiful things that the tourists would like to see. Tell us more!

The Comeback to Camp

What's up Beat. This is your boy Luis. Today I am going to talk about the comeback to camp. Wow it's my second time here at camp. I was here last year. I did 9 months so I finished my program. So when I got released I did a crime and the judge gave another chance to come back to camp so I gotta do at least seen months, but I ain't trippin though, 'cause I been here before so I know how everything rolls in here. Wow, 'aight then I am out - holla at you next time.

This time it feels different 'cause I do things different. Things do have to change cause last year I was here I was just wasting my time but now this time I am going to get my GED so when I get out I won't have to go to school. I am going to get my GED 'cause when I get out I got a job waiting for me. I am going to work on construction ... be getting pay 15 dollars an hour so that's cool. Wow, I am out, later.

-Luis

From The Beat: It's great to hear that you have both plans and opportunities to move you through these things. You will be constructing buildings, and also "constructing" a new life, brick by brick, beam by beam. What will it take to build that new life for real?

Life is More Serious Than People Take it.

It's a pocket full of reasons that I don't find things amusing, especially when I'm in the hall and people think everything is funny or it's playtime all the time that ain't how me and my ninjas rock.

Because we taught life is more serious than people take it because a lot of things can happen by playin' so I stay serious at all times, not speaking for anybody else, but it's cool to laugh and express your feelings but it's not always amusing when someone thinks it is.

That's all I got for this because I thought it was a good question. So if I do make this to the Beat book, I hope I understand what I mean by it's not amusing time all the time.

-Darnell

From The Beat: This is exactly the kind of writing that The Beat likes to print - thoughtful honest writings that genuinely give us all "a piece of your mind." ... So keep telling us more about what you take most seriously, what you sometimes laugh at just because it gives you a relief, and what you do when you start to feel stress? Or are you more speaking of people teasing each other but then the teasing goes to o far?

Open Your Eyes

Ay, yo Beat, hear me out as I speak
As I take you down this road of statistics.
They say we as black men could only play sports and rap.
They say we will get killed or end up in jail. We won't make it to see 32.
It's time for change and change is here.
Open your eyes: We are living and we are more than what you say.
We are powerful speakers, family men, factors in school, in the white house, and we too are people.
We can change, we have changed,
Stop making comments and movies about us and live your life.
Stop fearin' us and love us.
'Cause we love our wives just as well as you!

-No Name

From The Beat: This is straight POW material, full of pride and strength. Next time be sure to sign your name so you can get credit for the power of your words!

Waiting

Shhh! I'm still up in the hall as you can see. Well, I'm just waiting for the R.O.P. release to come. But it's gonna take forever. But I'm just waiting. I'm missing my loved ones, my girl. She's in a different state but we are still tryin' to make this work. I really have strong feelings for her. I love you, Ashley. Stay solid and strong for your man.

- Bandit

From The Beat: Good luck Bandit! Long distance relationships require a lot of work, even on the outside. Are you writing to her a lot?

Bargain Shopping

Well today I'm just here. I wanted to talk about how I missed my curfew call. It sucks real bad because I only got a 12 hour pass this weekend instead of Friday at 2:30 PM to Monday at 7:30 AM. But it's looking all good because the week after that we got Christmas extended home visits. I leave from Friday the 19th to Monday, so it's looking super good for me. But yeah this weekend I got three pairs of pants.

Alright I picked out three pairs of \$5.00 pants but they were on sale for 19.99, so then when I was paying for them the total came out to 64.52, then the dude said he had a coupon so I'm thinkin' it's probably going to lower the 4.54, but no, it came out to 51.36 so I bought three pairs of pants that costed \$55.00 for \$19.99 so then when I was paying for them the total came out to 64.52 then the dude said he ah a coupon so I'm thinkin' it's probably gon' lower the \$4.52 but he jugged me and it came out to \$51.36 so I bought 3 pants that costed \$55.00 for \$51.36.

-The Boy

From The Beat: Hey congratulations on getting a good deal on your clothes. It's good to put on your own pants, right, instead of county? We hope that soon enough you'll have that freedom in every part of your life, and that you'll take care of it!

Countin' Each Day

What's good wit' it Beat it's me Gustavo from East Palo Alto here at camp countin' each day... I've been here since May and I'm going to get out in January. I can't wait, believe it. I'm gonna finish High school and get me a job so I can support my family and start this serious relationship with this girl I like. I hope it works out, yaddamean?

So I just pray to God to let me out this BS camp - because it is hella bootsy. So yeah I hope I get out and don't come back. -

-Gustavo

From The Beat: Congratulations on being about to get released! That's great, we are proud of you.

Guns

I think guns are a good invention because you can use them to protect yourself but I don't like that they can be used to take a life.

My grandma eats chitterlings, and I heard that's supposed to be pigs intestines or pig boo boo, but I don't see who would eat shhh.

-Tj

From The Beat: Tj, you have some great ideas for longer pieces here, and we hope you write more next time! In your personal experience, have you seen guns used more for defence or for offence? Would a gun ban in America help things on the streets? In terms of chitterlings, it's true they are pig's intestines and rectum. But they are carefully cleaned, and oh so delicious! Have you ever tried the chitterlings that your grandma makes?

I Do It For The Streets

I'm mob livin' servin' these knocks
 Who is unforgiven
 Tryin' to make a livin'
 Talkin' about what we doin' and who we getting'
 When we be blastin' these shots if you wonder why
 Whatever happen to pops. When I was puttin' food on the table
 When momma's was lost
 It just seemed like a fairy tale until my brother left
 Then we had to make bail
 People said I would never amount to anything
 I would just fail
 But if that's to be true I wouldn't be here tellin' my tale
 I could see the tears in my mother's eyes when they sent him to the pen never thought I'd see him again
 Folks was talkin' about what they was goin' to do next but what when they didn't get there welfare checks
 I'm the lonely soldier got a burden on my shoulder
 How am I supposed to get over this obstacle
 How am I supposed to break this boulder
 I do it for these people who are in struggle
 I do it for the people who are in trouble
 'Cause I preach through subs
 In my back seat ninjas was starvin' so I gave 'em something to eat
 Everything I do, I do it for the streets.

-Momo

From The Beat: From The Beat: The streets need you, the country need you, your son needs you - we need people out there who understand the pain, the struggle, and the beauty out there in the ghetto, and can help make it better, who can speak up, with passion and power the way you do in your verses. But if you really want to be that hero, first you have to save yourself, and find a way to get your own life on straight. Can you do that? Are there legit ways for you to put food on the table, and be there for yours?

Anarchy in the USA

(From The Beat: Josh drew a picture that we were unable to reproduce right next to the piece. The picture was a rough Anarchy sign – an upside down A with a circle on it, as well as n upside down cross. We hope this helps you visualize his very powerful metaphor) I think this needs to be in the Beat as is because it shows how crooked the American government is , how sloppy and disorganized America is.

If I were to speed time perfecting it, it would show that America is perfect, which we all know it is far from. The upside down shows how America worships a false power, meaning all religions.

-Josh

From The Beat: If religion isn't what would keep us finding hope in life, or the feeling that someone can tell us right from wrong, than where are we to find it? Where should we turn for comfort? Where should we learn how we ought to treat each other morally? Tell us how you personally find those things. You may have a lot to teach us.

The First Time

The first time I saw and held a gun was when I was 8. What comes to my mind when I see or think about a gun is fun, and also death. I think we should have guns for protection but if we don't have guns we wouldn't need protection. No, I wouldn't give my child a gun because if he acts like me, something bad will happen.

-Duane

From The Beat: Duane, this is a great piece, and we wish you had written more! You say guns are fun—what about it is fun? Why are little boys so fascinated by them? (Were you fascinated by them when you were 8?) What are your ideas about how to stop the gun violence?

When I Get Out

What's up, Beat? I'm good, just trying to do my time in and get out. When I get out I am going to go to school and go to college and get a good job and have kids and put them through college, and buy a business and buy a home.

- Devenae

From The Beat: You've got great goals! We all need help with our goals, though, and we hope that you have support to help you achieve everything you'd like to, one step at a time. Can you tell us more about what those steps might need to be?

Gun Violence

Yeah! What's up? This is Slick. What I think about guns is that you need them sometimes but you don't sometimes. It depends on the situation you are in. For example, if you live in a dangerous zone or hood like Oakland you would need a gun for protection, for self-defence because you could get robbed or jumped and threatened and you will need a gun. But you don't need to shoot, just scare them away. But if you have to you have to.

-Slick

From The Beat: Isn't this the main problem with guns though? That people feel like they "have to" because they are afraid, and then tragedy strikes?

My Name Is Ron Ron

What's up with The Beat
 Man this camp stuff is weak
 People say they get active but ain't
 They ain't got no heat
 So before they tell me lyin' speech,
 I tell them don't speak 'cause my name is Ron Ron
 And I stay writing to The Beat.
 Now I'm gon' say this again, this camp stuff is weak,
 I'm used to riding around on 22's or 23's and smokin' on big trees but I miss them streets but bein' in love with the street I can't get back on my own two feet
 So I thank the Beat for lettin' me get this off my chest
 But now I'm going to let my hands rest
 And say Peace Out to the best.

-Ron Ron

From The Beat: You may love the street but it don't love you back/it fiends for your blood like a knock feeds on crack/and if you fall from a bullet or catch a life case/another lost soul will just take your place/but there are people out there who do love you, your family your friends/the sky up above you/we say you CAN get up on your own two feet/you deserve more than fake love from the street.

Juvenile System vs. Adult System

If you mess up good
 Now you are on paper
 If you're a felon it will make it hard to get your cheddar
 Maybe if you're a kid you can get out, but you have to be smart.
 Not just book but street smart as well.
 Right now I'm in the system but I'm not stuck
 I know where I'm going and where I'm headed
 Those who are stuck I truly pray for them
 Because once you are in it's hard getting out
 When I do I'm going to scream and shout.

-Ashley

From The Beat: This poem shows real determination to lead a positive life, and you also show you know how challenging that can be. So in your mind, what will your book smarts be that you use to help yourself with? And what will your street smarts help you achieve? It sounds as if you have both, so tell us some more details for your readers and fans in the Beat!

Not Going to Make my Mom Cry no More

What's good Beat Within, this yo' boy Billy. Yeah I'm back now. I'm doing my time up in camp. How much I hated the hall I miss the staff in my old unit and some of the kids and I even miss them haters up there.

Man, but I'm outside now, I'm not in a room no more locked up. But it's still not home and it's weak, but shhh I'm doing my time and. A, you need to keep yo' heads up do yo' time, that's all I got to say, I'm gone.

Man I don't know what I'm gonna do when I get out, but I think I'm going to stay doing some of these groups they do up here in camp, and start to get my GED or something. But that's all talk so I don't know what I'm gonna really do when I get out but I know that I'm not going to make my mom's cry no more, and I'm going to be staying with my mom's and lil' brothers and be there for both of them.

-Billy

From The Beat: Welcome to Camp – it's good to hear that you are outside, enjoying fresh air and moving one step closer to the freedom you need and deserve. So far it's good that you like your new situations... Which programs do you think you might continue? What kinds of things have been most interesting to you so far?

Close The Gun Stores

The only way we can stop gun violence is to close all the stores that sell guns. I think people who are disabled for example in a wheelchair should be allowed to have a licensed gun for self-protection. But I also think someone who is a high profile celebrity or a lawyer or a judges should be allowed to have a gun for self-protection.

But the only way to stop gun violence is to close all the gun stores.

-Farhad

From The Beat: Thanks for putting your thoughts down on this important issue, Farhad... Gunmakers make so much money off of their "product" that they've managed to get a lot of power in this country, and it's the youth that end up suffering the most. How would you suggest we fight back against the powerful gunmakers though?

They Say Appreciate Today

Wake up in the morning
Brush my teeth and I grease my scalp,
get a bite to eat and I'm out
As I look out my RIP Hoodie, I think.
I almost forgot return to the room grab my banger and I pray
They say appreciate today, but another would be great.

-The Whole Eight

From The Beat: Another day sure would be great. You deserve that and more! You tell a violent story but you tell it with heart, like Ice Cube in "It Was A Good Day" or Scarface "Never heard a man cry". Keep writing!

Play My Song

If I don't make it play my song
When you ride through listen to me
See if I can get inside you
Tell my momma that I never meant to leave her man
Tell my lil' bra we gon' meet again.
Show my mama big times and a happy home.
Wipe her eyes

-J

From The Beat: There's a lot of love in this short poem – so much love that we think you've got too many reasons to value your life. Do you do everything you can to protect it, and to be with your family? Because there's too much talent and heart here for you to lose it!

Still Here

Damn, I'm still in here. It is your little homey Buggy coming out of Fremont. I've been here for a long time. I thought I was gone get out but the judge keeps playing games with me for like 3 months.

It makes me hella mad, but it is my fault. It seems like every thing is falling apart. My lady thinks I cheated on her because I'm in here and people putting stuff in her head. That makes me hella mad but it is my fault for getting locked up in here. But I got to go.

-Buggy

From The Beat: We all make mistakes little homey. But it's how you handle the situation after you make the mistake that really defines your character. All those problems that are going on the outs, you can't really do much about it. Don't stress off of it. Do you, handle your business and get out. And when you do get out stay out, so you won't have to come back stressing.

Stuff Gettin' Shady

Stuck in the Hall and stuff getting' shady
tryna get back to my ol' school block,
my gun and my old lady,
waitin' to get out 'cause times be getting' hectic,
These bootsie ass ninjas and these ancient ass rec shhh
Feelin' real reckless since life ain't fair.
Don't tell me nothin'
to keep it real, I don't care.

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: We hope this is not true – because there's only one thing worse than feeling pain, which is getting to the point where you don't care – but one thing that is true, no one can "tell you" anything. Your life decisions belong to you, and you will make your own choices. Our new year's wish for you is that you make choices that will make you happy and keep you safe.

Guns

Guns are no joke because most of my family got killed because of gun violence for no reason.

Just like my uncle Tanta got killed for no reason, like Burger was killed by his girl brother, and Paco was killed by some fools.

-Jamon

From The Beat: Guns are the most horrible invention ever. If there were no guns, then maybe all your folks would be alive maybe this world would be a lot different. Why do you think there are so many guns out on the streets?

I'm Not Conceited, I'm Convinced

I'm not conceited, I'm convinced.

To be honest, I'm cocky.

I'm the most awesome person I know. Being me is the greatest thing.

I'm intelligent, funny and absolutely adorable.

You can sit there and call me ugly all you want but I don't care.

There is no way I'll let you give me second thoughts or doubts about my appearance, the size of lips

The arch of my back, and the sway of my hips.

I'm gorgeous in every way

I'm the shhh is what I always say

You may call me stuck up you may call me a B..

But like I just said, I'm the shhh.

-Shenowa

From The Beat: We think you're as beautiful as this writing implied/but it's because of the beauty we know is inside/in your heart and the pain that you've suffered and known/the way that it's helped you on your way to grow/so share the most awesome girl that person you know/from inside not outside that's where it will show!

Why Should I

Why should I have to suffer because of you?
 Why should I have to take the blame too?
 Why should I have to deal with the hardships in life?
 Why should I have to listen to you dish out strife?
 Why should I have to be the one to blame?
 Why should I have to be the one to feel your shame?
 Why should I have to Mom?
 Why should I?
 Why should I?

-Rocky

From The Beat: These are sharp, pained questions, we'd love to know more about what lies behind them, what kind of answers you would have in mind. A mother and a daughter are bound together even when they have anger between them. Have you tried to answer some of the questions you pose here?

Gun Violence

What up Beat? I agree guns are no joke. I thought guns were joke as people in my neighborhood flashed them around. Some people carry guns just to be cool. But others carry guns to be safe because people want their heads.

I had a personal experience with guns many times. I had a couple guns in my life but part of what I am in here for is because a gun went off in class and they found the gun. They thought the gun was mine so they are trying to put it on me, but it was not mine.

-Lar

From The Beat: That's a messed up situation to be caught up in. Why do they think it was yours? Did you give them any reason to think it was yours? Sometimes if you give people reasons they automatically assume that you're guilty. You're saying that you didn't do it, and we believe you. How can you prove your innocence? There has to be a way.

My Mama is My Best Friend

One thing I don't find funny at all is when somebody is talkin' about one of my close family, like my mama, because my mama is my best friend. She is closer to me than anybody and I take everything somebody say about her to the heart. For example, when one of my close friends disrespected my Mama by accidentally callin' her a b - we ended up fightin'.

-Marscellious

From the Beat: It's true, that bond between mother and son or daughter deserves the greatest respect - what are the other ways you show your love and respect for your Mom, and for the other people in your life whom you care about?

Respect from

The first time I held a gun I was 12 years old. I was in Modesto in a farm, which had big land. My uncle came out with a .22 caliber and a rifle. We went hunting for rabbits. I was surprised with how a little gun can tear off a rabbit's foot. I felt kind of bad but it was funny.

From that day on I respected guns big or small. I have a gun and I am not afraid to pull the trigger on anyone who messes with my family or me or people I care for.

But I won't do it because I know what will happen if I get caught. But I care, but it will be worth it, maybe. But I don't know I am out and back to my cell hahahaha.

-Lil' Homie

From The Beat: What kind of respect do you have towards guns? Is it the power that they possess or is it your fear? 'Cause just as easily as you're telling us that you're quick to pull the trigger, there's also about a million other fools with that same mentality and maybe even worse? You don't think about being on the other side of the barrel? Probably not, because by the time you do it might be too late.

Weird Food

My dad makes a (caldo) with chicken feet it's very good cause he makes it all the time because I tell him I like that food. He told me that when I watch people doing the food it gets over salt.

That means he makes it very salty. That's why I don't really like to see when he makes it cause when I eat it I like to enjoy the food with soda.

-Yogi

From The Beat: We think that's great that you're open minded about food. 'Cause that also means you can be open minded about other things in life too.



You Win!

I give
 You take
 I'm real,
 You're fake
 I love
 You don't
 I commit
 You won't
 You want
 I need
 You don't give in
 I lose,
 you win.
 Never again.

-Lamarr

From The Beat: Seems to us that the winner is you/ because no matter what pain your life puts you through/You will never be alone if you've got a pen/To express how you feel, with the paper as friend. Peace!

Disappointment

Today I had court. I was almost sure I was getting released but I ended up getting sent to a group home I was really disappointed.

-Juan

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear that. Do you have a plan for when you enter the group home, so that you can use your time wisely there?

Should of, Could of, Would of, But Next Time I.....

Sometimes I feel depressed so I just take walks sometimes, but I just should've followed the rules. But I bet you next time I'll follow the rules. But sometimes you just got to do your time.

This time when I go to court this Thursday and get released I will try to do my best by staying home and going to school. I'm telling you this will be my last time messing up because I'm only 12 years old and I don't like being in here.

-Sebastian

From The Beat: Just follow the rules my man and you'll be on your way to a trouble free life. If you sit here and actually do what you're suppose to be doing, then you won't have any problems. We're glad to hear talk so mature for being so young. You definitely have your game tight. Keep it up and it will pay off!

Crazy in My Mind

My father told me not to get in trouble and look where I'm at. "Jail is not the place to be" my father used to say! I never listened to him and, now I know what it is to be locked up. I wish I was at my house with my family. The stress level, the depression level, it's killing me. I don't know what else to do to not go crazy in my mind.

-Sad Boy

From The Beat: Write! We mean this. While you are stuck in jail, write poems, write your life story, write your hopes and dreams. And read too - let your imagination take you where you physically can't go right now. The most important thing is that your body is in jail but your mind belongs to you, right? So show us what your mind can do!

Gun Violence

What I think about gun violence. I think gun violence is not necessary, I'd rather fight than have to shoot someone. Sometimes people use guns cause they're afraid to take an ass whooping. I would also stick 'em 'cause its personal.

-Winston

From The Beat: You make a good point to start off, and then you contradict yourself, by saying you DO want to use a gun if it's personal. Why not use your fists, or even better, find ways of dealing with the situation other than violence? Or is this totally naïve? Tell us more about your thoughts on this subject, we'd love to read more!

Gun Violence

The gun violence in Oakland is terrible because people now a days kill other people over petty things like calling a girl a b word, smelling bad, and other things that is uncalled for.

So I got a main question "why is there guns in the world?" If it was up to me, personally, I don't like guns just because they kill people and that ain't cool.

-Dominic

From The Beat: That's a very good way to look at it. Too bad not everybody thinks like you Dominic. Why do you think people don't think about what they're doing before they actually do something so crucial like taking someone's life?

At Ten

The first I saw a gun was when I was like 10. I was at my friend's house the first time I held it. I felt power in my hand and excitement, like I wanted to pull the trigger and see how it feels to blast. Then later in my life I saw more and more and years passed I lost friends to gun violence.

I think it would do good to get yours off the streets but at the same time it's hard for us not to carry guns because we need protection and we know other people will carry them. I wouldn't want my son to pick a gun but if he's already in the game then I can't blame him for carrying one.

-Unknown

From The Beat: What kind of game are you talking about? How would you let your son join the game? Wouldn't you rather see him in the game? Cause you know there's only a couple ways out of the game. And one of them is either jail, or a pine box. Would you want that for your son?



That's Real

If you 'bout to do time and yo' homie dropped a dime,

That's real my mans

If you just copped to 10 in the Y or the pen,

That's real my mans

If that robbery got y'all thrilled, the next day he got killed

That's real my mans

If you had a bad dream that was nothing like Dr. King

That's real my mans

If you need yo' space stressed out 'cause yo' case

That's real my mans

If you want money, power, respect 'cause you thuggin' in yo' projects

That's real my mans

If you tryna get dough all through the rain makin' it snow,

That's real my mans

If it's a hard knock life so you choose money as a wife.

That's real my mans

If you going through trial, ain't had a visit in a while

That's real my mans

RIP Scilla

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: This is like a modern-day blues that reaches out to share respect and compassion for everyone who struggles with the system. But now we have to find a way to make a change, first in ourselves, and then in the streets - and that's real too.

Gun Violence

Man, check this out! My homie that's resting in peace gone actually rest in peace, because I'm gone touch every last ninja that had something to do with my ninja's death, ya dig?

Anyway, gun violence ain't a cool thang, for real. A person can crush your entire life with one squeeze of that trigger. These new guns that my goons got have 100 rounds plus, so I know if these 223s hit you, they knockin' everything loose. People these days don't know what they doing with these guns, so innocent people get hurt and they target get away, and nowdays, ninjas shootin' at anything.

People need guns for protection, because if someone get at you with a gun, then you better have something to get back at them, ya dig?

- Gunster

From The Beat: There are a whole lot of ways to "touch" people, so if you're intending to hurt or kill anyone responsible for your homie's death, what is gained? More young people die, you can get hurt or killed yourself, or, if you get caught, spend the rest of your life in state prison or be executed. So how many people will be dead if you "touch" these people too hard?

Rules Of The Streets

1. Do not snitch.
2. Never leave your homie.
3. Never love a girl if you ain't in love. Only love someone if it's true.
4. Do not leave the block unattended.
5. Treat the 'hood with respect.
6. Get your structure. Lots of people have a lack of structure, that's why a lot of people don't obey the rules.

-Anonymous Follower

From The Beat: Someone once wrote that the root of all wars is that people feel that their families, their neighborhoods, themselves are being threatened, even to extinction. Do you think that's true for your homies in your neighborhood? How do your rules keep your neighborhood calm and safe, or don't they?

Ain't Feeling None Of This

Fo' real, fo' real, I don't even know what to write about. This be gettin' super can, my ninja, fo' real, yo. This same routine every week. Don't nothing change but you, my ninja. Even yo' conversation became different man. Messin' 'round with them people, my ninja. Don't get lost in this thing. Stay above them dudes in the long shoes 'fore you be comin' out the hat, if you get what I'm saying. I'm out. Sincerely yours.

-E-Boy

From The Beat: You're right, "don't nothin' change" inside the system. If you want change, it has to come from inside you... How's that coming?

Waitin'

What's good with The Beat? I ain't feeling the topics so....

I just wanna say I'm in here holdin' it down, keepin' my head up. Just spent my 17th birthday in here. It was weak, but been eatin' phat, though.

Waitin' on the day when I get out. Seems like forever, but they can't hold a goon down forever.

To those who holla out thangs behind doors, ain't nothin'. Get off who you mad at, bruh...

-Backstreets

From The Beat: We're sorry you had to spend your birthday locked up, and hope your 18th birthday will be spent in freedom. Of course, that is a matter of the choices you make when you touch down.

Hate These People

What's really good with The Beat? Me? Nothing—thuggin' this time out. I be home soon, man, but the only thing is when I go home, I got to be on this ankle monitor shhh. All these people want is a young thug in the house, but you know I'm go do me, with or without the ankle monitor, ya dig? But I be home soon, for all the ones who want to know. But, yea, this a lil' something on my mind this week. I'm gone.

-Tizzle

From The Beat: As onerous as wearing an ankle monitor will be, because you'll feel and be hobbled, at least you'll be home. The authorities are giving you a chance to prove you can be trusted with responsibility. Will you prove them right or wrong?

Man, I Thought I Was Getting Out!

Wha's up Beat? It's your boy Isaia still locked up until January of '09. I was supposed to get out long time ago on 20th of October. But they playing me.

I been here for two and half months in jail, about to be three months, but I'm not proud of that. But I'm officially getting out in Jan. of '09 to go to Wyoming. My mom is sad about everything that happened. I can't lie. I'm in a gang. My mom is mad, but she dealing with it.

Well, I hope I get out. I'm going to miss my baby mama every day I'm in here. This is the last time I bein' in jail. I love ma mom and family, baby mama.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: When you love your mom, your baby mama, your baby, and your gang, you have to make some choices about what you love the most. If you love your gang, you will always leave your mom and baby and baby mama behind, and in tears, no matter how much you say you love them. You can't have it both ways, which is why you are now separated from all that you love. Time to make some difficult choices, which take some personal courage. We hope you're up to it.

About Me And The Halls

What's up with The Beat Within? Yeah, you know this lady-to-man. Ha ha. Yeah, but chu know I'm in the halls. Been here four times, and I'm tired of being up in this G-thang. But you know I'm getting out Thursday 12/4/08 and I'm so happy, so I can see my hubby. You know who you are, don't front. But all these females up in here all about talk and don't never get active. That's all Vernisha about. Everybody heard of me?

-Vernisha

From The Beat: If you've been here four times, then you should be giving yourself advice, and no one else! When you are truly tired of handing chunks of your life over to strangers to tell you what to do and when to do it, then you will stop doing the things that lead you to lock-up. Unless you make that change, you'll be spending a lot more time with a lot more females... feel us?

Freddy Kruger

This violence is hectic. Ninjas getting smacked. You can't leave the house unless you strapped with a tap.

Believe what I say; I seen it live and direct. Hatas had to go because they had no respect. So believe what I say, be safe on your block. Because I'm just like Freddy Kruger, nightmare on any block.

-Lil' Twin

From The Beat: We almost did not print any of this because The Beat won't promote gun violence (so we took out two lines which did just that). We don't believe anyone can teach respect by shooting someone! Fear is not respect. We hope you wake up and realize that the government doesn't care if you're Freddy Kruger or not. They will ALWAYS be able to outgun you and stop you, as you are now stopped.

Gun Violence At Ten

Well, the first time I ever saw a gun was when I was about 10 years old. I was at my house and my friends called me to go outside, my other friend had taken the gun from a family member.

Later that day he brought it over to my house and gave it to me when my parents were not home and nobody was looking.

When I think of guns, I feel like I wanted to take it around my town to show people that I don't play but I never did that. I think we should have guns in our lives so that people can take care of themselves. I also think guns shouldn't be in out in the community so that we can handle our business the old fashioned way.

No, I would never want my daughter, or if I have a son, to have a gun or see or use a gun in their lives. I really don't know how you can change guns.

-Roman

From The Beat: We know just how you feel—looking at guns, seeing how dangerous they can be, but not knowing how to change their presence in our—your—communities. Do you remember how you felt when you saw that first gun—scared, intrigued, overwhelmed, or what? It's interesting that you don't want your child[ren] to have guns in their lives—what can you do as a parent to keep their lives violence-free?

Wasting Your Time

Young men get smacked left to right almost every day "God" took they life, but what can we say
He took they life for a reason because they were wasting time
People were stressed out because they had stuff on they mind
They don't make enough money so they be on the grind
You can't run away from death when God want you to die
Too many funerals and violence all around
Lots of bodies six feet underground
I'm a young ninja in the game but it still the same
At busting cannons I'ma be in the Hall of Fame

-Hunter

From The Beat: It's easy to "blame" God for taking life, but that's just a way to duck from personal responsibility. What kind of God takes so many young boys in the prime of their lives? No, the choices you make are what determine your fate. If "God helps those that help themselves," then you are not helping yourself by boasting of being in the "Hall of Fame." In fact, you're in jail. Open your eyes. This is not a Hall of Fame, but a Hall of Shame!

Gun Violence

I think that shhh is messed up and shady when ninjas don't really be in that shhh but still get hit with bullet that ain't meant fo' them. Get that shhh right. If you going to do it, do it right. Don't put innocent people in that shhh.

-Bushy

From The Beat: As long as children have guns, innocent people will always be victims. You can say, "Get it right," but look around you and see how many people (young and old) get it wrong, all the time. Yes, it is very messed up and shady!

Tired Of This

I'm not feelin' it today, Beat. It's just one of them days. One where shhh is just a little off. Tired of the bullshhh. I'm ready for some real shhh. Too many lies. I'm done givin' a damn. Peace!

-No Name

From The Beat: We all have days when we want to give up. But in the end, we come back, because giving up means giving up on ourselves. What you feel at this minute is not permanent; you will feel different tomorrow.

Speak Up

Going through different type of issues

Mama using tissues

Thinking why you locked up

Police said you wouldn't conduct

Why not speak up

In yo' cell going crazy

Thinking the police tryna play me

Neva was a good kid

Thinking back 'bout the shhh you did w

Why not speak up.

-Snax

From The Beat: Maybe the police are trying to play you, but are you giving them the ammunition they need to do it? When you're in your cell thinking about your mama using tissues, do you also think about what you could do to dry her tears?

I'm Back

What's up Beat, it's Andrew. I'm back from L.A. Well, I failed the group home cause I ran. I was only there for 2 weeks then ran and tried to come back to San Jose.

Now I'm spending time in the hall waiting for an opening in another group home, I've been here almost a month and counting when I could be a month closer to getting out and off probation.

-Andrew

From The Beat: We hear sadness in this piece, and that makes us sad. It seems like you have some questions to answer for yourself, like why you ran, and what you were running from at the group home, or towards in San Jose. What can you do differently this time around to reach your goal of being off probation and out of the system?

My Status

What's up, Beat? This ya boy, Lil' Bra. My sis is with me at all time. I been in this G-thang for 'bout a month. They say I should be going to an out-of-home placement.

My wife is also with me, and forget 'bout what the next girl or girls have to say, 'cause in the end, she's all I got, and I don't want to lose her. My birthday is 12-3-91, which means I have to turn 17 in this G-thang.

This is my first and last. I'm out this G-thang, ya dig...

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: When you say your sisters and wife are with you, do you mean they are locked up here, or with you in spirit? We hope they aren't here. Maybe by the time this is printed, you will already be out, and you will be able to keep that promise that this is the last time to get locked up. What is your plan to make that promise come true?

Baby Gas

Gas, cash, my little stash

I can't get no money in here, so I'm gonna get a rash I need to get out and on my granddaddy, I mean, fast I'm always first, never last

All these little smart comments, for now I'm gonna let that pass

So since I'm getting out sooner than I think, I'ma jus' laugh

'Cause they don't wanna see me when I snitch and smash

On time, never late

Soon as I get out, my outfit gonna be cake

I stay to my team 'cause I'm allergic to the fake I'm keep moving 'til this money I make

-Caprice

From The Beat: When getting cash is on your mind/ It's easy to fall, and trouble to find/ Don't forget what it's like in this locked-up scene/ And whatever you do, keep your nose clean!

Your Dude And Mines

Your dude,
Is he nice? Is he rude?
Like walking around the house with a towel and halfway nude?
Is he sexy, with a hem attitude?
Well, mines, let me tell you, he all the way fine
When I tell him to come in, he does, right on time
He stay with me even though I'm on my grind
Locked in juvy, guess who on my mind
He'll sparkle in the thunder, whether my little sun shine
I'm old to this, speaking through a rhyme
I just gotta tell you where I get my little dime
His name is Thizz,
Just to let y'all know, I'm his
Y'all say I'm young, but I call y'all little kids
If y'all know him, that, too, is my bizz
When I get out, I'm going straight to him
They don't want no beef, so I ain't stressing 'bout them
Baby gas, lil' mamas and my team
On the squad, man, I does move mean
Even though I ain't out rushing that cream
My lil' daddy is the whole reason I'll cause a scene
Every time The Beat comes, I does my thing
Next time I'ma make a rap and I'ma have my sis sing
I'm an angel, but Thizz is my wings
Alright, I'm done, y'all fo'eva ha steam

-Caprice

From The Beat: Like we've said before, the only way to do what's needed to keep a loving relationship going is to be out, working on your issues together. So, forget about the other young women in here and what they are or are not about, and focus on what it takes to get out and stay out. And good luck with your man.

Untitled

1. Back on the unit
2. Being unaccepted
3. Where can I go now?
4. I still hold my crown
5. Winning all my rounds
6. Loving the crowd's sounds of round of applause
7. I'm still dope
8. Don't touch a 'Port no more
9. I keep on the scoreboard
10. Brought my game back to the new millennium
11. On no presentation
12. Can you feel the tension?
13. Oh yes believe it
14. Feeling the aggression
15. Leaving the sensitivity
16. You should know my name

-Mobie

From The Beat: We're not sure how to respond to this, except to say it's hard for us to get past number 1... What brings you back, and what will keep you from another return trip?

I Don't Like Guns

I really don't care for guns. If it was up to me, I would have everybody fighting still. I think if you have to run to a gun before you use your fist, you are a punk. I would like to tell everybody who use your hands. See you next time The Beat.

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: We also think that using guns doesn't show how brave you are, but how afraid you are, so we agree with you. Since you are a thinker, can we ask if you have any ideas or suggestions about how to persuade young people to put down their guns?

My Girl

Well today I'm not feeling this topic so I'm gonna write about my girl. Well, she's my girl, I love her more than anything in this world. She's my angel, and she's been there for me through thick and thin, any kind of weather. Rain starts to fall I'm gonna be her umbrella keep her dry even when your life is wetta.

-Jose

From The Beat: We hear twinges of Rihanna in this piece, and we're digging that. You make a great point—how when you love someone, you want to protect them and make sure nothing bad ever happens to them. How does your girl protect you? How can you change your life to make sure that you don't ever have to leave her for prison again?

Gunshots Seem Normal

What's up with The Beat? I mean, gun violence is rapidly in all areas. When I hear gunshots, I think it's normal. But I hate when people I befriend die. It hurts inside when I cry.

I don't like the violence. I can tell everybody whose people lay in peace to understand sometimes it's meant to be.

-Dana

From The Beat: Every violent death leaves someone's mother and loved ones feeling the same hurt you feel when someone you care for loses his or her life. When "gunshots are normal," something is very wrong. What should the government, the community, or each of us do to change this?

It's About Family

What up with it? I realized that the topics were weak. I'm sad I'm here. Can't be with may homies on the block and stuff. But honestly, it really ain't 'bout homies, it's about family. They the only people who visit you and shhh.

I'm in here for robbery, some dumb thing. It's like when you on the outs, you do anything. But in here you think and make promises and you end up getting back.

Man, I need help. To all, keep ya heads up. Stay safe late.

-Maher

From The Beat: (We had a hard time reading your name, so we apologize if we got it wrong.) Knowing that you need help to keep the promises you make in here when you're on the outs is the first step to getting that help. What do you think you need to remind you of the consequences when you're free to make your own choices? Who is hurt the most when you end up here?

Can't Be There For My Newborn

I just got a letter from my homeboy. He said nothing much happening, it's all cool. Reading his letters, his hand written words. I can hear his voices through my mind. Every phone call, day, I hesitate.

I'm too afraid to call the one I love. Now I got a baby coming on the way. I'm not sure if I'm ready for it. My boy's been telling me it's all right. But I can't sleep thinking about my unborn child. It's tragedy that I can't be there for baby.

My baby's mama tells me she's ready to leave. This makes my time here worst.

-Dk

From The Beat: Yes, OK, it is a tragedy that your baby will be born without a father there to guide him. Can you tell us why so many boys (not yet men) are making babies when there are ways to prevent pregnancy, if you act responsibly? We know you think about the future, and your unborn baby's future, but why didn't you (and so many others in your situation) think about that before creating a new life that you can't take care of? We're sorry your baby mama wants to leave, but by coming here, you left her first... Will you have a role in your child's life when you get out of here, or will that be up to her?

Looking At CYA

Hey, Beat, this Banana. I'm back up in this G-thang. It's hella weak up in here. I'm eighteen, about to be nineteen May 7th. I came back on some dumb stuff. I had a dream that I was going to CYA, and today, date 12/2/08, my PO came to see me today and said if a grouper don't come get me, I'm going to CYA. Damn! Dreams are real.

So to all up in here, pray for me so I can go to a grouper. Well, that's all. To my hubby, I love you. Love,

-Banana

From The Beat: Look, Banana, if it's "hella weak up in here" and you're "back up in" here [especially "on some dumb stuff"], then doesn't that make you weak, also? What will it take to give you the strength — the courage — you need to stay out of this weak place, and the places the system has waiting for you down the line?

Back And Forth

What's up with The Beat? I'm back in here. I just got out on the 21st of November. Now I'm back in here. This time I said I was going to change, but you can't never change when people put you down and say little stuff. But keep yo' head up! I'm gone, lil' dawg.

-Yung J. Newt

From The Beat: Well, if "people put you down and say little stuff," then you must be giving them something to say. There will always be snitches, from top to bottom, so if you don't want to be here, you have to make those changes you say you can't make. We know too many people who have decided they don't want to be prisoners, and have made those tough choices. When will you?

It's A War

What's happenin', man? I'm still in this thang holdin' it down.

But guns... I think that it's important to have one because if you in this war that I'm in, an' you don't have one, you are guaranteed to get RIPed. You feel me.

-Pokiooo

From The Beat: We wish you would write more about this subject, because you're just giving us your surface thinking. For example, if guns give you the protection you believe they do, then why are so many young men with guns dying?

Guns Are Serious

If you got a gun and you get into a fight and they start clappin' it up, it is your right to have a gun (Second Amendment). It ain't cool to have showing off. It's only for self-defense. That stuff does not make you look good. I thought it did, but look where I'm at — locked up and they won't let me out!

-Derrell

From The Beat: By saying that it's not cool to use a gun to show off, you acknowledge that the 2nd Amendment is not absolute. It has limits. What other limitations and conditions do you think go with "the right to bear arms"?

What Goes Around...

What's poppin' with The Beat? This ya boy "Drewski" still in here. But you know I'm holdin' myself down like a anchor. But for real, though these staff be on some other shhh, acting like ninjas retarded and shhh. But it's cool 'cause whatever you do, it's finta run back up on you sooner or later. But I'll holla at ya next week.

-Drewski

From The Beat: When you say that "whatever you do, it's finta run back up on you," are you talking about the staff, or yourself? Is being here an example of something that's "run back up on you?"

Eating Sunflower Seeds

I like eating pork skins. If I had a choice what to eat all day I'll eat sunflower seeds and drink tampico juice. By eating sunflower seeds, I just like to eat the seeds and the juice is just good. I love that your mouth operates when you're eating sunflower seeds. They have all different kind of flavors, but the ranch kind is the best.

-Unsigned

From The Beat: Don't forget to put your name on what you write! Also, don't rewrite the Beat topic, just write your own piece [which you did after you wrote our questions]. Do you get the sunflower seeds with or without the shell on them?

Guns And Butter

Guns are good and bad. We need them for protection, but some people don't know how to use them. When the wrong people get a hold of them, it's not a good look. A lot of clowns get hold of them that don't aim and hit innocent by-standers instead of the target. Others use them to rob, and some robberies go bad, and another innocent victim is murked.

-Rasco

From The Beat: The problem is that there is no way to keep those guns out of the hands of foolish people. As long as children can get hold of guns, they will act like children. And children are clowns. When we read of all the death and destruction, it's hard for us to see how any good comes from guns!

My Mom Knows What I Got Myself Into

What hurts my family is being at the Ranch, but my mom knows what I got myself into, but, anyway, man, that all I got to say and love you, Mom. You feel me?

-Grimey

From The Beat: Does it help you that your mom understands all about why you're incarcerated, or is that humiliating for you, or both? Will her understanding help you stop whatever it is you were doing on the outs?

I Get Down For Mines

Don't go there 'bout my dead homies or my family. The reasons are because I will get down for mines. I don't like jail, but I will go if I feel like it's something that could 'cause me to lose my freedom. So what? I'm go ride it out.

-Ali

From The Beat: We understand the urge to react when those you love are disrespected, but to do things that put you in jail don't make sense to us. Do you respect yourself and your own freedom less? The hall is minor compared to jail, which is nothing compared to prison! We hope this is not something you have to learn through personal experience in the future...

Skip's Broadcast: Take It Too Far

Ninjas need to know when they takin' shhh too far, ya dig? Because if people know what they sayin' is true, they or they fam gon be lookin' real foolish if they become a victim of an ass-whooping, or worse, a casualty.

Everybody is not built with the mental capacity as everybody else. I ain't gon hypocrite myself, because I've taken stuff too far, but I stop when I hit that boiling point.

-Skip

From The Beat: You could have made this a much stronger piece, Skip, by giving us some examples both from those you talk about in the beginning, and from your own experience of hitting that "boiling point," we'd have a much clearer sense of what you mean.

Real Ninja Every Day

It ain't like we like to do it. You gotta tote fire
 Because if you don't, then it's a good chance you gone die.
 Because everybody want a piece of the good life.
 Give us a piece of the pie, then we all right.

All the ninjas I done looked up to done gone fed.
 And all the ninjas I admired got plenty bread.
 And I was taught that a real ninja don't beg.
 And these streets was never designed for the scared.
 And all the ninjas that ain't broke, they done took the chance.
 So if you on your game, you bet not show your hand.
 A ninja told me I can't sell dope forever.
 I told that ninja I don't want to hear shhh from a broke ninja.
 'Cause how I feel if you broke, you in the way, ninja.
 Forget what you heard, I'm tryna get rich today, ninja.
 Don't talk about it if don't pay, ninja.
 Money excite me, not females, okay ninja.
 I feel, if you broke then you deserve to be
 'Cause it's too many way out here to get cheese.

-Yung Dooda

From The Beat: So, you won't take advice "from a broke ninja," but we're supposed to pay attention to someone who's locked up and talking about how to get your money? Hmmm. This doesn't add up to us. Seems like the money you're making now is going right into the pockets of the strangers who tell you what to do and when to do it. Read the Beat Without section and pay attention to those who, like you, thought they were "real ninjas" — and are now trying to stay alive in the huge and growing prisons of California. Do you think they might have something of importance to say to you?

Don't Go There

I don't like when people talk about my family. It is disrespectful, so I feel like I should do something about it. I think. "Oh, that just gave me a reason to fight them or shoot them."

Would you like it if someone say something that make you mad? You will do the same. That's why I feel like that about my family. Like if you say something about my family, 'hood, ninja's or other things, it get ugly. When I get a called a sucka, it's going to be on.

I don't react good.

-Cenious

From The Beat: We also get angry when people disrespect us or those we love. But how we react to that disrespect can make a big difference in what happens to us (and them). Fighting and shooting are two possible reactions, but both can lead to terrible consequences, even worse than the disrespect itself. Can you think of other possible ways to handle the situation?

The Power Of Guns

People who walk around with concealed guns put themselves in situations that force them to use them.

People wouldn't bother or pick on other people if they didn't have their guns. A person might use his gun just because they were bullied and want to get revenge. Some people need that power a gun brings them to feel safe and that helps them get their way. The power of the gun can corrupt some people, and others work with it.

-Gt

From The Beat: Very thoughtful essay. It's true that people holding weapons can revert to them whenever they feel threatened, get angry, or whimsically, like whenever they're in a bad mood, if they indulge themselves, and that's really dangerous, you're right. On the other hand, some young people insist they need to carry guns for protection, even in their own neighborhoods. What solutions to this weapons standoff— to carry them or not—do you have?

Not To Be Played With

One thing that you can never joke about is family. If you about the family — whether it be the street or blood family — that's something that you don't play with. Another thing that you don't play with is the 'hood. Touching bases with a subject like that and playing about could get you played out. That right. There isn't anything to be played with.

-Philly

From The Beat: We agree that nobody should play with what another person loves (family or not). What we question is the reaction when such disrespect occurs, because the violence that you hint at does not promote the respect you want, only fear — and the strong possibility that you will pay the highest price, and not the person you're trying to teach a lesson to.

Skips' Broadcast: Weird Foods

I pretty much anything... when I'm intoxicated, but I don't go as far as pigs' feet or nothing like that. First off, ain't no feet goin' in my mouth, period! But I ate sushi before and I didn't approve! But I ate alligator. It was cool. I ate duck and it was pretty good until I found that it was duck. I hate eggs. Anything with eggs in it, I distance myself from it. But I love food though but I stay away from a lot of stuff.

-Skip

From The Beat: Do you eat chicken? It's no different from duck. They both come from eggs (but so do alligators). Anyway, we found this interesting. If you ever travel out of the country (or even to different parts of the U.S.), you will find people all sorts of things that you might find strange, but which is their ordinary diet. Maybe we should have a topic on the most exotic or strange food you ever ate...

Just A Reply To (What You See)

When you look into my eyes
 What do you see?
 When you look at my body
 What do you see?
 When I look in your eyes
 I see a happy future in you with a smile
 Me and you viewing a sunset
 Later we text that what I see in you
 You can see in me
 When I look at your body
 I see a well self-takin'-care-of
 Very consistency person
 (Consistency — firm and thickness degree)

-Mobie

From The Beat: Well, with a treasure like this on the outs, it seems like you need to find a way to hold onto your freedom — and to her — when you touch down.

Don't Go There With Me

I'm a quiet person, but when it comes down to a real situation where I have to react, I react. My instincts kick in. People threatening me, or if I gotta wake it up, then I do what I gotta do.

People running their mouth, disrespecting my family, my 'hood, or my ninjas, things could get real ugly. I can't stand disrespect. Joke about anything else, but when you call me a punk or a sucka or worse, or you disrespect the things I love, be ready for some beef.

-Gg

From The Beat: Have you ever asked yourself if there are other ways besides beef to respond to disrespect? We understand the urge to want to hurt someone who disrespects us or who and what we love, but is that effective? Does it end the disrespect? Is there any way that people can be made to see how similar we all are (we all have mothers who love us and who hurt when we hurt and grieve when we're gone) without resorting to beef?

Guns Are Fun

The first time that I ever seen or holded a gun was at the age of 15. The gun was a 12 gauge shot-gun. I thought it was pretty coo' to hold it and try to shoot it. I was gonna try to shoot it but I couldn't 'cause it wasn't loaded. Plus, I didn't have anybody to shoot it at.

All I have to say is that it was pretty heavy. It was a good thing that I didn't get to pull the trigger. I could've killed myself with it or just shoot the wrong person with it.

All I could say is that guns are fun. I don't care what people have to say about that. Well that's it for now till next time.

-Temper

From The Beat: When you say you could have shot the wrong person, you're telling us why guns — especially in the hands of young men — are terrible tools to possess. There is no RIGHT person to shoot at! All you have to do is imagine someone you love — a younger sister, maybe, or brother — who gets shot by someone like you who thinks that "guns are fun" to understand why guns bring nothing but death and destruction, leaving the living to deal with their grief and pain. Some kinds of "fun" are not worth having.

Gun Violence

Well, first and foremost, I would like to give my respect to the homeboys. This is the homeboy G coming at you from the max. Well, today I'm going to write about guns.

To be honest, I don't even remember the first time I seen a gun. I seen a lot and held a lot. A lot of things come to my mind when I think about guns, like flashbacks of how they have been used. Shhh, things come back to me like when I think about how many of my enemies, family, and even homies been dropped by a gun. But where I come from, mostly everybody got a gun. In Sacramento that's all there is, is gunplay. But I do think that in Sacramento you do need a gun because you either shoot or be shot.

Yeah, I would want my child to pack a gun if it was necessary because shhh happens. And I think that gun violence is going to get worse because there's more technology and things more advanced.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: One of the biggest problems with packing a gun is that it often produces what you describe as "shhh happens." When you're packing, you often take chances and put yourself in situations you wouldn't otherwise. How do you ever know if a gun is "necessary"? All the young men who paid the final price with their lives thought being strapped was necessary, but they are gone forever! We would think about that before we gave a child of ours a gun!

Deadly "Toys"

I was first a teen, I got my first cuete (knife). It was a sunny day when one of my homies came and told us he just bought a new toy. First I didn't really pay attention to what he was saying. But once he took it out, I got surprised and I wanted to use it. But I didn't really know if he was going to let me see it, so I just stayed quiet.

After a while, I was like, "Whatever," and told him to let me see it. He was like, "Simón." I was like, "For reals!" He said, "Be trucha with it because we don't want nobody to see it. You know how these people are. They see something like that and they start getting scandalous and it's all bad."

After a little while, I told him when was my turn to use it. He said to be patient, that my time will come soon.

-Stomper

From The Beat: It seems like you didn't get to finish this story. But even so, would it worry you to see someone as young as you were handling a knife? What do you think it means when children think of weapons as toys? Would you want your little brother, sister, cousin, nephew to have one? Why or why not?

Motivated To Stay Away From Haters

What up Beat? Well, today I'm go of track like always. Today was a slow damn day. I'm mad because my so-called homies, my co-partners, they doubting me because I got life skills. They saying on the street that I snitched! What kind of shhh is that?

One of my co-partners knows I didn't. He tells me not to trip off what they think, and I ask myself why can't they be happy for me because a homie gonna get out soon. But they hating on me. They say I snatched and I got caught up a day later. And someone snatched on me and everyone else. But they hate on me.

The way I see it is to hell with that and what they think! The only friend I got is the one I got in here. I'm sad because I'm leave this unit in a little while and I ain't gonna see him. They trying to screw him over, but I can't do anything, really I ain't gonna see him for a min. That's the only friend I got and my family, so when I get out, I hope they still think that because it will motivate me to stay away from them and think more about me and my family and do what I can to keep my boy company with a letter, keep him in touch and show some love to him like he has for me.

Well Beat, I'm out.

-Flea

From The Beat: It's too bad people you thought were your friends have turned on you and accused you of things you didn't do. You already have enough motivation to stay away from people like that. You're lucky to have found someone in here to show you love, and he's lucky for when you are out there showing him love. Treasure your true friends, and leave the rest alone! Treasure your freedom, and don't do anything that can lead you back!

Which Is Easier?

What's cracking Beat? This be that one and only Shy boy coming out of these Santa Clara streets? Well I'm here in the life skills unit and am about to write about what's easier life on the outs or being locked up?

Honesty I think being locked up is cookies, because it takes a real man to be out and taking care of his family and struggling to survive making ends meat. Any kid can get locked up and get his meals handed to him and being told what to do it is easy life for someone who doesn't ever want to take responsibility for his actions. I think certain vatos need to man up!

Well Beat 'till next time. To all keep your composure and stay solid!

-Shy Boy

From The Beat: You have a good point. It takes someone strong to live free and live for his or her family and self. Coming back here is just too easy and does no one any good.

Family

Life in hear is easy but yet hard it's easy 'cause we don't have to worry about bills and responsibility like our parents do, it's hard in here 'cause we can't do things our way and we don't have our freedom.

For me it hard 'cause I got my special family out there and I'm in here not doing anything positive but when I get out I'm never dreaming back here I hope I'm gonna do the best, it hard to be a dad for my son through these walls, but to answer the topic it's easy in here but hard at the same time. To all stay strong.

-Lil' One

From The Beat: Some responsibilities are better than being free of them, and family really is one of them. You're right that being away from loved ones can be hard even if the little stuff is easy. We hope you're able to do all that on the outs.

GUNS

What's up Beat? Today I'm writing about guns. I think guns are a real responsibility. Some people use it for good reasons but other people, they use it to hurt others. I think having a gun could be cool, but also dangerous.

-S

From The Beat: You could make this a much stronger piece by giving examples of what you mean. What kind of situation do you imagine where guns are "cool"? When are they dangerous? Do you think boys and girls (not yet men and women) should have guns? Why or why not?

Runnin

What's crackin' Beat? Well I'm going to write about runnin. Well I been runnin from the ranch since I was a young teen and all I did is get more time. I ran so many times that it's easy to run.

The last time I was on the run from the ranch. I was only out for a few months and I got caught for some dumb ass shhh.

-P

From The Beat: It doesn't seem to make sense to run. It's a temptation that just makes you worse off.

In My Mom's Shoes

The Beat Within I'm writing about the subject today because I'm a just give it a shot!

Well if I put myself in my mom's shoes I can't even imagine what to think. First off I would be sad because I don't want my child to be going down the same road I went down, and I know my mom doesn't want me going down the same road she went down, but I don't know....

All I know is that I got my mom's support even though I'm putting her through this, and my kids going to have the same love! Well to all keep your head up!

-Peanut

From The Beat: It's sometimes hard to step outside yourself, but you seem to be doing a really good job seeing what your mom must be feeling. We hope you can take that and do the best for her and for yourself (because she wants the best for you).

Living Free

Beat readers this is Peanut! I'm writing about it being easier for me being on the outs. For me it's really easy because I can handle doing what I need to do.

From in here I can't do anything but the same shhh everyday. Even if I'm doing bad I think it's better and easier to get help or even just talk, whether it be to a homie or a family member. Just stuck in this trap makes me mad but it's all. To everyone keep your head up they'll be better days.

-Peanut

From The Beat: You make a good point - one of the hardest things about the hall is the isolation. It separates you from the world, and makes you live with your own mind, even if it lets you live off other's food. We hope you find something here that helps you out there.

The New President

Hey Beat. What's good with yall. It's me Black Bird coming at you again. Well I'm very happy about Barack Obama being the new president of the Untied States. Also I'm proud of him because he made history. If I was 18 I would of made history because I would of voted for him. So I'm glad but I got to dip. G's up!

-Black Bird

From The Beat: We can all congratulate him.

On my mind

Q vole Beat readers how you guys been well as for this vato, I've been cool I guess. Well am just going to write what's in my mind. I was just thinking last night about my life I been in these walls all my teen life.

Now that am 18 years do I think different. The way that I think different is because now that am going to the ranch again am not going to run am not trying to spend my life in jail. I want to enjoy my adult hood in the outs.

-Monstro

From The Beat: Life is real. It takes some time for most people to figure that out. We hope you do what you can with your real life.

Which Is Easier

Hey Beat! How you guys been? Me I'm good! I only got a couple of minutes so I'm going to get down real fast.

Well today's subject is a good one. Life out there could be hard and easy. You know out there you could live with your family. But there might be someone who abuses them at home. There might be a bad influence at home like parents, brothers, cousins etc. They might give you drugs like meth or pep. In your head you want to say "nah I don't want to do this" but you put on that mask and just go along with the flow just so you won't look like a punk.

In here or other facilities kids come in filthy, hungry, scared. There in here and they forget about the abuse or pure pressure. They shower in here get three meals a day, When people come in here you get three meals a day, when people come in and take of their clothes, it stands by itself by being so dirty.

In the out's they might not have a place to sleep, shower. Brush their teeth, or my not even have family in here.

In here it ain't shhh, whoever ever thinks this hell! Stop gangbangin ! Drop the lifestyle you live! Stop gangbangin! Drop the lifestyle you live!

I'm a gang member and I know I'm not going to be successful.

But back to the subject I think that probably life in here might be easier if your institutionalized. But I rather be in the outs. I do make my own decision's I don't have to prove my self to anyone, no one pressures me, I have a family, I'm glad for it. That's my opinion.

Alright then Beat. Hopefully I get lucky and this get's published. Alright to all, stay up ..

- Victor

From The Beat: You make some really good points. It is harder on the outs a lot of the time, because you have to make your own decisions and live your own life. In here, you just get to forget your life away, and have everything stabilized so that you may as well not exist. You sure aren't doing anyone else any good in here.

I am

I am me
Easy to see
Come holler at me if you can keep it clean
No more fighting
No more fussing
I'm a good man
Working on one plan
Its for me yes its
Me , I am what I am so talk to me, if you want to be free

-Robert

From The Beat: It sounds like you are getting a good idea of what's important and what you care about. I hope fear disappears with the fussing and fighting.

Life

Being locked up in this giant daycare is hella easy. They feed you, change you, shower you, take naps, wipe your ass, take you to school tell you what to do I feel like if I'm in preschool all over again.

Even the education they teach you in here is easy like what 2t3?

I might of gotten locked up but I ain't ignorant.
In a few weeks I will be going to the ranch.

Being in the out's is hella harder then being in the out's is hella harder then being in here. In the outs your going to school, working and still smashing you have many responsibilities. The education is difficult and you need money so you work in a minimum paying job or hustling in the corner and nobody tells you what to do or when to school or to get a job your basically independent.

Well to all doing time stay up...

-Lil' Silent G

From The Beat: I hope the Ranch satisfies those needs for you, and helps you be independent. In any case, good luck out there. Be smart with your choices!

Inside Or Outside

I think life in here is easier, but not better. In here I don't got to trip about the police or the detectives, you don't have to trip about a house raid while your sleeping, but you still gotta stay on your toes. I still can't wait till I get out. Life in here is easier, but I'll take my chances on the outs. Well that's all I'm gonna say for today, so late and stay up!

-Payaso

From The Beat: I think most people would agree with you. Things that are easy are rarely worth it. Coming back time and time again is easy, but it won't get you anything you want. Are you man enough to do what's not so easy?

Hey Beat!

Well beat. I don't know I'm pretty mad because I've been here almost 2 months and you guys haven't put my stuff in. but yet there's other ones that are hella stupid and I see those in there. But now it's whatever now. So I'm gonna try it one more time and if mine ain't there I won't write no more. So I'm out for now. Late Beat.

-Flaco

From The Beat: If you write your heart out, and you mean what you say, and you say what's important to you and is respectful, you will make it.

Knew The Truth

Before, when I was doing what I was doing, I knew the truth about the gang life. I was around a lot of gang activity. I did what I did before, but I learn from that though, I'm tired of what I use to do, that's why I'm done with all that.

I would tell kids not to follow through what you see in front of your eyes, if you do, your hurting your loved ones, who you love that who your hurting I hurt my family when I was out in the streets doing what I did, but I learn from, it's better to learn now and have goals for yourself, I have goals for myself, because I'm gonna make my mom and dad happy and proud of me, I love my family.

-Denny

From The Beat: Thanks for your words of wisdom. It's hard sometimes to imagine what happens to others when we screw up. I hope that others can learn what you've learned without having to live it themselves.

Reasons Why

I'm not in a gang, but I know why any person would join a gang though. First to get someone back (revenge). Somebody always has their back (protection). And to make sure their friend will always be backed up (loyalty), but most do it because they like to and love fighting, that is why.

-Juan

From The Beat: These are three real reasons why people might join up. But unfortunately revenge means that any protection or loyalty is lost, because no matter how protected you are, all it takes is one moment of revenge to lose everything.

My Loved Ones

I hate being locked up.

These walls keep me away from my loved ones like my girlfriend.

I am going to miss her b-day and our second anniversary.

I can't wait 'till I get out.

I am going to make it up to her for everything I've missed.

I miss her and my family when I get out am going to do so good.

-Memo

From The Beat: How are you going to make it up to them? What are your plans?

Obamarama

Hey Beat! Me, I'm doing good in here. Well I'm not feeling today's topic, wait never mind I'll write about the new president. Well I think he's gonna die, if not now then later, I don't know he might change something in the USA he got million and millions of people all riled up, he better do what he promised to do, we don't need another Arnold (The Terminator) who's going to take money from schools and country or we don't need another Bush causing wars.

Hopefully he's a man of his word and he does good as president because if he doesn't then most likely he might just get killed.

- Victor

From The Beat: Well, no matter what, he's going to die. No one yet has survived forever. But I think you're right. With a lot of hope comes a lot of expectation. We all hope that he can help the nation, but don't be surprised if he stumbles, too.

RIP

What good Beat well I just came back from a screwed up visit.

I found out my homie from my hood got shot and killed on the spot. He barely got out from CYA.

It's all bad.

Barely 18 years old.

He is gone now, but will never be forgotten.

Rest in paradise.

The last time I seen that homie he was in court here in juvie

getting sentence to a cool minute to CYA.

I got locked up before he got out

now I can never get to see him.

Rest in peace Lil' L.

-Lil' Silent G

From The Beat: It's a little scary to know that it can happen that fast. What kind of life do you want? Even if others can end it, you can control what you do, and who you are.

Obama And Racism

When I found out we were having a black president I was so happy. But at the same time I was scared, because I knew someone was going to try to kill him. But they didn't.

Not in 100 years would I have ever thought we could have a black president. But I don't think racism will end. I don't think so, not even in 100 years, because people just got that mind mentality about people.

-Obama Fever

From The Beat: We hope you are wrong about racism. And Obama's election certainly proves that we've come a long way in just fifty years. Each of us has an obligation to help eliminate racism, and irrational prejudice, wherever and whenever we encounter it.

Ranch Poem

Time goes on day by day.
Although I got 6 months to pay
I'm hold my head up high,
my shoulders broad, walking with pride.
It ain't going to faze me if ninjas gonna hate.
I'm a boss 'til the end,
with dollar signs in my head.
Ain't getting no mail.
No phone calls to make.
Just waking up to ninjas I hate.
They ain't on this hype -
money hype I mean.
Nobody messes with a boss baby -
that's me

-Vicky

From The Beat: Hey Vicky, we've been watching those guys on Wall Street who had dollar signs sticking out of their heads. They aren't so happy now. Maybe you should think about finding another way to give your life meaning. We're sorry you aren't getting any mail. Are you writing any? {You're a pretty good writer.}

Love Is

Love is love
Love is sweet
Love is nice
Love is happy
Love is kind
Love is people
Love is you
Love is everything

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: Love is a lot of things, and there are some wise people who say it is everything, everything of importance, that is. But love is also action, right action, doing good things. Without good action, love is just a word.

About Love

Love is strong and it can take you over.
It can change your whole mindset.
Be careful who you fall in love with,
'cause you don't wanna end up heart-broken,
blaming yourself for his mistakes.
Love is powerful and makes you make decisions
without even thinking.
So just be careful, and stay strong.

-Lauren

From The Beat: No such thing as a decision without thinking. That's what a decision is - an act of choice. If you act without thinking, you aren't deciding, but mindlessly reacting. Better to think through any major moves. As you point out, a failure to do so can land you in hot water.

Poem

Wake up
to make up
with money to spend.
Catch me rolling with the big wheels,
not the ones that spin.
I'm a boss dipped in sauce.

-Vicky

From The Beat: What flavor is that sauce? Must be pretty messy, whatever flavor it is.



Back

Hey Beat, this yo' girl back up in the honors unit again - for the seventh or sixth time. Yeah I know: that's some dumb shh. But anyway, I ain't feelin' the topic tonight.

So yeah, I have nothing to say or sing, but I just wanted to say that my mom's been in and out of the system for almost her whole life. She just got out a month ago and now she's taking care of business, and probation. Much love and respect. Yo girl.

-Malae

From The Beat: We're glad your mom's taking care of business. We'd be even gladder if you took care of business. There's a better life to be had, and it's painful to think that you could end up going in and out like your mom. Now's the time to get it together. We guarantee you that your mom doesn't want you following her example. Get with it, Malae. This is it - this is your life.

Until The Day

Here I am in juvenile hall. Staring at all four of these walls. Just waiting 'till the day I get out testing fools to be what they about not knowing what they will do. Just sitting waiting for time to pass and waiting for the day 'till I get some lovin'.

-Flako

From The Beat: Sounds like a plan.

Touched

Some people say I'm touched, but not by an angel,
Most people think I'm a troubled individual,
Really I am a product of my environment,
On the streets selling dope for early retirement,
There's something wrong I feel no regret,
I don't give a damn about forgive and forget,
I look deep inside in search of my soul
But end up disappointed when all I find is a hole,
I have much built up hate,
I hope someday it won't hold me back from my
Fate,
Until then I'll just sit in my cell and chill,
Wait til med time takes another pill,
Going to Ranch and doing time,
for something that the system considers a crime.

-Nathaniel

From The Beat: Believe it or not that hole and hate found deep inside you is holding you back. And the problem is that you haven't realised it. We recommend that you re-search your soul again to find a solution. Until then, just go back to your cell and keep searching. Search for the positive side of you.

Dangerous Vida

Q-vole Beat? It's this vato back again to talk about my vida. Well, I get out on Tuesday, so next time you come, I will be here. So, when I get out, I'm going back to school. If I do come back it's because my vida and my love for my varrio and that's gonna be the reason.

I can't complain because I love it and the way the gun blows. So, yeah this is mi vida (my life) so to all the homies in here keep your heads up and don't trip it's gonna get better alratos.

-Pl

From The Beat: What's going to get better? Nothing will get better if you are thinking of living the same life style you LOVE. Just be ready for the consequences that this life will provide to you. One more thing, be careful with what the gun blow. "Live by the gun, die by the gun." Don't forget this saying.

Should I Run

What's crackin Beat? This is Gumbie. Well, for right now, as you can see, I'm still here. Well, I'm not feeling none of these topics, so I'm just gonna speak my mind.

Well they're sending me to Wyoming, but I don't know if I want to go. I haven't made up my mind yet. But damn I'm tired of all this shhh, but I'm looking for a way to get around it, but I always seem to fall back in the system.

I know running ain't helping it, but I just can't seem to do my time. But I think if I run from Wyoming, then they're gonna give me life skills, but damn they never do. Maybe this time they will. I don't know, but we'll see what happens.

-Gumbie

From The Beat: Don't run! Do your program. If you run from your problems, your problems will hunt you forever. The solutions is in your hands. Don't mess it up. Start acting like a grown up, because you're heading there.

I Want To Play!

Yo' what's good with it? Well, today I'm gonna write about The Beat. In my opinion forget The Beat. I appreciate the people working in The Beat in taking their time to explain to us 'bout different kinds of topics each Thursday.

I don't like The Beat because it takes time out of our activity off instead of having free activity or watching a movie. We have to write to The Beat.

I give credit to the other people locked up that write some smart shhh, but sometimes they don't even publish our shhh. I have sent drawings and writings to The Beat and they don't even publish 'em and I draw some good shhh and I write some good shhh!

-Dv

From The Beat: Thank you! Even though you wrote against The Beat, we appreciate it so much. Do you know why? Because we just got out of you what we seek from all you, self-expression. If this is how you feel, you've just participated. Keep writing us. That's what we exactly want for you. And about your art, just have patience.

Coming Soon

Coming soon! Back to the community is your boy Phaing.

I'm gonna be out in 20 days baby!
I'm gonna be going out in 20 days baby!
I'm gonna be going out to my family, my son.
It's been a little while since I been gone.
I'm hella excited! I feel like I could run 5 miles.
Just playing you crazy. I'll be hella tired.
I wouldn't be able to feel my legs. Peace out!
The next time I see y'all is never.
Baby!
Baby you got me feening.
Baby you be pleasing me.

-Phaing

From The Beat: We take it you are pleased to be leaving the hall.

I Wonder

I wonder if you think of me like I think of you,
I wonder if you kiss my picture at night too,
what would happen if I never met you,
I wonder what I would do,
I wonder if the world stop spinning will I fall off without a trace,
I wonder if there's another fella trying to take my place,
tell me if your talking to other guys, it's a mystery
I wonder if it'll be that easy for you to forget our history,
I wonder if the sun stopped showing will the moon be sad,
I wonder why loving you hurts so bad,
I wonder if I was blind will you take my hand and lead me,
if I had no arms baby would you feed me,
I wonder if I died will you get my name tattooed above your eye
for the whole world to see,
I wonder if you would die for me like I would for you,
just like Romeo and Juliet let our love be true,
right now I'm lost, I'm wondering in the dark,
the only time I felt safe was with you baby
wait for me so our love could be true
but for now all I could do is wonder of you.

Z

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece. You ask all the questions we wonder about when in love. But as pretty as Romeo and Juliet are, as dramatic as a name above your eyes is, know that love is also about being there, and being around long enough to help the other through life.

A Gun Brings Problems

What's up Beat how have you been? Well, today is Thursday and I am going to write about gun violence.

When I was young, my dad had a shotgun and when he got locked up and did some time, he got out of the pen and my brother and I visited him at his apartment. I asked him if he had the shotgun still and he said yes. He threw the gun out the window and my uncle got mad and went to get it.

When my uncle came back he said we need it for protection and my dad said, "I could go back to the pinta!" And my tio (uncle) end up hiding it in the garage.

My dad's parole officer came and did a search and found it. My dad went back to the pen for 5 years. He is still in the pen but for something else.

Well till next time Beat alrato.

-Chango

From The Beat: We are sorry for you dad. He was right when not wanting to keep the gun at home. Keeping a gun at home is very dangerous if not away from those who can't use them, and especially when being on probation or parole. Your dad is an example. After what happened to your dad, would you keep one?

Speak Up

What's up Beat?

You should of spoke up, now I'm hooked on drugs and messed up, speak up, if you love me, now I'm on the streets oh, I was so lonely you did speak up, I never heard you at all now I'm stuck in the hall, thanks, I was falling in self-destruction, now without drugs I'm able to function.

-Gilroy

From The Beat: Keep it functioning without drugs. Getting hooked is really easy, but getting unhooked is much harder. Take this chance to stay away from drugs. This is your chance to defeat it. Don't throw it away!

Reality

If I was in the Presidents shoes, I would be nervous and worried because basically the whole world is on your shoulders. Your choices affect every one. So you have to make sure that you choose the right thing or you will be hated from every one like George Bush.

-David

From The Beat: So, what type of president would you be? What would change?

My Love

Well, today my topic is what's on my mind. Well everyone always tell me I'm whooped. I'm not. I'm just in love. She means the world to me.

I've been in and out of this facility and done beat cases. I need to open my eyes and realize I have not only got both of my parents. I got a lady that's down for me.

I have been with her 1 year and a half. I love her and will do anything to prove it. First I need to stay out!

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Start working on those plans. You got it. You got the point. Don't let go of it. We are so glad that you're thinking like this. So glad! So, for the next time you write to us, don't forget to tell us what your plans are. Your parents and your girl deserves your positive thoughts and a big change.

Gangs

Aye what's crackin'? It's that beast they call shabbs coming at you. If you're gonna join a gang, don't regret it. I don't feel no remorse or shame in gang, banging it's all or nothing. That's just how it is when you're a gangster. Feel me.

-Shabbs

From The Beat: You may not feel remorse, regrets or anything like it, but if you continue acting and thinking like this, you WILL. And when you hit this point, it will be too late. Be careful with your beliefs because it can turn out to be your end.

You In My Shoes

To imagine myself in somebody else's shoes. Would be one thing I wouldn't do, walk a day in mine

A life considered crime
Due to my life of struggles at the time.

I don't know it all
but I been around the block.

A everyday struggle and battle
that would leave someone in shock.

If you feel me and know how it is to struggle in life
those who are hurt learned to hold back their cries.

-Listo

From The Beat: What's in your life that can be consider a crime? What created these crimes? The decisions you make? We all know how it to struggle in life, but that doesn't give us the right to keep making our lives worse by doing wrong actions.

My Love My Son

I love my son to the fullest

I wish I could be with

I wish I was there for his birthday

I wish I could be there when he needs me

I wish I could be there when he walks

I wish I could be there when he took his first step

I wish I could be there when his sick

I wish I could be there when he needs help

That's why I love my son to the fullest

-Droopy B

From The Beat: Are you doing something to be with be there for him? A child is a blessing. You can do all this and more with him. You just need to make up your mind and give him what he deserves. But, are you really willing to give everything up for him? That's the big question.

Gun

What I think about guns is that I hate them 'cause I think everyone should just use their hands, and there would be less deaths. It would be a good to have less death.

Every day I pray when I wake up. I really hate guns. I haven't held one and wouldn't. I'm old school and just all hand. I don't need a weapon.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Good for you. Only if we all thought the way you do this world would be a different one. Keep yourself out of the reach of guns and try to teach the new generations that guns are bad.

The Historic Election

I believe it's good to finally have a black man as a president. I think our country will forget about racism and mostly everyone will start getting along.

-Mc

From The Beat: We sure hope you are right. The stakes are high, and the President-Elect is asking each of us to consider ways to serve the greater good. Have you considered how you might help out?

This Reality

Really everybody should have their priorities straight before joining gangs and know the true consequences for leading the life they live. So really everybody that doesn't know here it goes. GANG LIFE AINT ALL FUN AND GAMES. There are cons and you need to know where your at. For me I love my life and wouldn't change it. We to all stay solid and keep your shoulders straight.

-Shy boy

From The Beat: Thanks for laying that out there. We think sometimes it takes people some time to figure out the pros and cons of anything. Hopefully you can get the word out so people don't make the decision without knowing the facts.

Why Guns

What's new The Beat,
homeless playing with guns,
always get six feet,
it's not good,
packing a glock in 'hood,
nobody don't wanna die young,
so why is ninja playing guns?
Thinking it's fun,
'till her mother loses a son.
Now ended doing 25 to life,
behind my gun,
aint gonna see the light,
we know what's wrong and right,
so why we keep bring guns to a fist fight,
you live by the gun,
you die by the gun
That's why homies always find themselves on the run, so just say no to guns!

-Stacks P

From The Beat: Responding back to your question: we don't know why. Do you know why young people are killing each other with guns? And what's most important, do you know what we can do to prevent it? Thanks for your words. We hope this message opens at least the eyes of one person in here.

Plenty To Think About

When I do get out I got a lot of responsibilities on my hands. I got two kids and no money. But since I'm in here I have a chance to work in here because I'm in life skills. So hopefully that happens. But yeah. Until next time I'm out so stay up and be cool. Late beat.

-Flaco

From The Beat: You seem like a guy who spends a lot of time thinking about his plan. But your plan is just the surface. What drives you? What connects you to others? What do you wish you could say to everyone?

Can't Wait To Go To The Ranch

What's up Beat? How have you been? Man, I can't wait to go to the Ranch. Beat, I don't want to be waiting for a long time. I am number thirty and something on the list.

I'm waiting in this unit and I am waiting to go to the next unit to go to the Ranch, so I can do my time and get my OT. Then, I want to be able to see my love and have fun when I see her.

When I get out, I am going to stay out of trouble and stay out with my family.

-G

From The Beat: It seems like all you have left is to wait to get transferred and do your time. Try to learn something that can help you in your future. How are you planning to stay out?

Sun Set

Some females remind me of the sun. Their bodies are very hot and their personality and smile just bright up the day.

-Nasty

From The Beat: Nice.

Speak Up

To the Beat and fellow loved ones. Today I am going to write on this topic that caught my eyes "speak up."

Before I was at the Ranch, I used to always be with my loved ones and instead of telling them to chill and be cool, I would encourage my loved ones to go with me and be stupid. Well with much love.

-Chucko

From The Beat: It's not too late. Right now might be the exact time to speak up. Right?

The Best Food

Today I'm going to talk about my favorite food. I like it when my mom make tacos, posole, enchiladas, menudo, and gorditas.

That's why when I get out I'm gonna tell my mom to cook for me. That's all I have for today.

-Chino

From The Beat: You are proud to have a mother who cooks so well and so many different types of food too. It seems like you are missing out on so much. Wise up!

My Barrio

I'm going to tell you about my barrio. My barrio is a place everyone knows each other and where we take care of our own people also don't got to be scared in any way. In my barrio you can walk free. And some times my barrio is a evil place to be. If you want to know what the barrio is all about come around and see how you get treated.

-Binladen

From The Beat: If safety makes a home, then we'd be careful what you do. Because before long, you could be left without a home, but if you do things right, the world can be your home.

APA

What's crackin Beat? Well I'm back in here just waiting for Friday to get out on APA, so I'm just gonna do my APA program, get off probation, just kick it, and do my thing. Well I'm out now.

-Arlato

From The Beat: Good luck! By the way, what's doing your "thing" means?

Gun Are Good

I think guns are good. They were made for a reason and I think people be packing guns for protection and others for violence.

The first time I held a gun I was at a friend's house. It was a shotgun and it was his brothers'. I would like to pack a gun, a big one. I don't think they could ever stop gangs because gangsters multiply.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Why would you want to pack gun for? Do you know how many years you can get for possession of a gun? And how many additional years you can get if loaded? We would think about it seriously if we were you.

Belief

You showed me how to stay strong. You told me to keep my head up. You made me believe in myself. You always stood behind me. My mother is always there for me and stays behind me. I miss and love her so much. She believes in me.

-Samantha

From The Beat: And she wants you to believe in yourself. You say you do, and we want that to be so. We think you know what to do. So, bit by bit, day by day, start doing it.

Paint The White House Black!

What's up Beat and Beat readers? Well, anyways, I'm gonna write about Obama winning the election. Damn, I was hella surprised. I don't think he will last long. I think he will be killed, because there's haters and they don't want to see a colored person in the White House, running things.

-Me

From The Beat: Obama will have plenty of protection from the haters. We think he'll be OK. We can't wait for him to start tackling the many problems our country now faces. And remember - he's not a miracle maker. He'll need our help to make the changes we all need. Have you thought of what you might do to help?

RIP Brianna

Well here I am just thinking how much I miss you, how much I want to see your cute lil face, your cute smile, your cute ways. It's crazy how one day you're here, and the next day you're gone.

I just don't know why this is happening to me. You were part of my heart. You were just so sweet. Now that you're gone, I'm just so weak. I still ask why. Why did you have to take my cousin away? But I guess you were the one that God wanted to take, the sweet one, the lovely one, the kind one. Well, I love you very much. Don't forget that you're my sweet lil one.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: We do not know how to explain such losses. But we know we are sorry for your loss, for your family's loss.

Yo Yo Yo...

What's up. This Vickyy. Wanted to show some love to The Beat. Like whaaa.... I wanted to say my goodbyes. I'm leaving to the ranch on Tuesday. I ain't really tryna go hella bootsy. But to all you juveniles - keep your head up. Life goes on. I'm gonna be 18 in July, so after I'm through with this ranch, it's good. But I miss my man. I ain't gonna be able to talk to him for 6 months. I'm hot. It's nothing to a boss.

-Vickyy

From The Beat: We thank you for the love. And we send our love back to you. We're thinking about this 'boss' stuff, and wondering how important it is to you. If you had your choice of pursuing all the things in the world - we mean the good and healthy things - that interest you, what would you do? Each of us is good at something. And most of the time, when we focus our energy on what we're good at, it makes us happy. What is that pleases you? What are you just naturally good at?

Praying To The Lord

Everyday I wake up and say to myself what am I doing in here. I pray to the Lord and ask him to get me out and pray for everyone in my family and my cousin Paul to get out. He has to pray too. The Lord is going to believe and it will come true. Well late Beat, God bless.

-Unknown

From The Beat: We hope the Lord hears your prayers and grant you with your desires. You also need to put some effort to stay out of here.

Don't Go There

If I tell somebody don't go there, it will be because they are talking about my mom. And if they don't stop, we are going to have to fight 'cause I don't like it when they talk about my mom. I don't even let my dad talk about her.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: That shows how much you appreciate your mother. You should also try to show more appreciation in different ways—like getting educated, staying at home, and being a better person.

Locked Up

I think it is easier to be locked up than to be on the outs. Because on the outs you have to worry about probation being on your ass. You have to worry about paying bills and shhh. But in here you don't have to worry about that kind of shhh. But it is also better to be on the outs because you have your family and freedom.

-Rico

From The Beat: It's cliché, but freedom unfortunately comes with some responsibility. Your family and your freedom expect you to do the best for yourself. You don't, and you may have problems.

USA History 2008

Finding out that we now have a black guy as a president is shocking to many! When I first found out, I was glad. I wanted him to win!! I'm looking forward to the future and what he could bring us! But personally, I think he's gonna get shot! I'm surprised that when he came out to make his speech on the day he got elected that nothing happened!

When the time comes for him to be in the White House, I'm expecting our world / country to be better than what it is now!

Looking forward to the future....

-Tenesha

From The Beat: We're looking forward to it, too. There's so much to be done, so many people who need help. We're looking forward to better times.

Life's A Bummer

What's good Beat? How's the bizz? You know it's been a long time since I've been home, and I miss my family so much. It's crazy - you really don't know what you have 'til it's gone.

You know Beat, if there was a time machine I would go back in time and change the mistakes I've made in my life. It's hard to know you can't go home and be with your loved ones. Life can really be hard, but I guess you sometimes make it that way.

-Samantha

From The Beat: Yes, it's easy to fall into unhealthy patterns, and often difficult to break them. But it's worth every ounce of effort you put into it to change those bad habits. Try working on a small one, at first. Then work your way up, in order of difficulty. Before too long, you'll be feeling good about yourself.

Bisexual

I think most girls are bi
 Even if they wanna lie
 And hide about it
 Ya feel me?
 It ain't nothing to be ashamed of
 People shouldn't judge
 They don't have the right to
 Everybody is their own person
 As for me
 I don't give a damn
 What people think
 I ain't 100% bi
 You feel me?
 But I do experiment
 And for ya boys who like girls
 Just 'cause they bi
 Y'all needa get a life
 Honesty is policy

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: You're right, your sexuality is your own business, and it's great that you don't judge anyone else, either.

I Want

Well, I'm tired of this place
 I just want to go home
 And sleep in my bed
 Watch TV
 Whenever I want
 Use the phone
 And call whoever I want
 To hug whoever
 Ride in the coupe
 Hang out wit' the goons
 And do whatever we want

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: What you yearn for is your freedom. That's natural and understandable. In your heart you know what you'll have to do or stop doing to maintain your freedom, once you're home again. Is your freedom worth it to you?

Quick Rap

Staring at this dictionary
 Dear Death, I'm never scary
 In the casket solitary
 Cold as a January
 I lived my life fast
 So had to die slow
 Forget ninjas alive
 Remember you when you gone
 Like militant
 Abused like a stimulant
 Live life wild
 Brought up with no discipline
 Moms did her best
 But the hood wouldn't let go
 Love my ninjas
 Yee, no no
 Relieve my stress
 I sip Robo
 Lean like Cholo

-J

From The Beat: It's sad that you're thinking so hard about death, but that must be real for you. Since you can see that the way you're living your life may be risking it, why don't you stop whatever you're doing out there in the streets now? Maybe you aren't scared of death, but you aren't stupid, either. What is so worth it to you, that you're willing to die for it?

New Year's Resolution

Control my anger
 Stop fighting
 Stop running
 Learn to obey the law
 Stay out the halls
 Love myself more
 Learn to trust others
 Complete my placement
 Get my diploma

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: All wonderful goals. How can you deal with someone you're angry at, besides fighting?

Money, Sex, Drugs

Three things that's messed up in life.
 Money: just causes problems.
 Sex: I lost it too early (fourteen years old) and I thought love was sex.
 Drugs: Just block out reality and mess my mind up and my relationships with people. I've done stuff that I regret, due to drugs.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: When you get a real job to earn money, you'll appreciate how hard it can be to work and appreciate money more, and hopefully, spend it slowly and save it. Also we hope you have the support not to fall back into the traps that bring you here

My Goals

Graduate high school
 Get a job (get money)
 Get off probation
 Make my family proud
 Set a good example for my lil'/big brother
 Find me a good (worth keeping) boyfriend
 Get my own place
 Get my life together

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Your goals are all great ideas. How do you feel about setting out in life on your own? Do you need a job? An apartment? Can you talk to a counselor and set yourself up?

Last Time

Well, I'm going to another group home somewhere in near Reno. I'm gonna miss my mom and lil' brother. Even my lil' brother gone get sent to rehab. My moms said if he get sent away, then she's going to pack everything wit' ma dad and move to another county. Since both her kids is gone, be gone to placement, she's gone have nothing to do. I feel really bad and sorry, 'cause I love my mom to death, but I have problems that I just need to solve, so me being away might help. I'm gonna be gone for at least 9-12 months. It's sad, 'cause in ten months, I'm gonna be eighteen.

I'm going to graduate school in a group home, and that's hella bootsie bunk. But, yah, feel me? At least I'm gonna get my diploma. I'm gonna spend my eighteen birthday with strangers. I already spent my seventeenth birthday in a group home. Ahhhh... It all worth it, and make the best of this bootsie bunk experience. I'm gonna graduate the program and come home and get my life together! 'Til next time, hopefully I'll be working for y'all.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: You have a good attitude toward going to a new group home. You're right, it may help you to see a whole different life.

Pain

I have a secret to tell
 Come close, come closer
 And feel my misery
 Do you feel the hurt
 In my voice?
 Do you see
 The pain in my eyes?
 Do I look like a person
 You could trust?
 I'm scared to love
 And be loved
 People have done me so wrong
 They've took all my powers
 I'm no longer strong
 I feel weak as a baby
 My body hurts and is sore
 My mind's gone crazy
 Can you let me
 Out of my door?
 Can you give me some advice?
 Please treat me nice
 For I have feelings, too
 And if I were you
 I'd think twice

Alyssa
From The Beat: Yes, you do exude misery, and that's so sad. It sounds like people you've loved and trusted have betrayed you. But it can be tough for teens your age, because they're just starting to discover the world on their own, and dealing with adult emotions and decisions is difficult enough alone, and sometimes young men just can't promise to love anybody forever. So can you for now just enjoy them, be friends with them, love them, and develop your own life the way you want?

**A Black Man**

It's cool selling weed until you get caught. My boy got caught and he's doing ninety days for it. Where I'm from, I have no beef with anyone but the government.

J Rock

From The Beat: What about you? Have you been busted for selling weed? Other than it has made selling weed illegal, what is your beef with the government?

Going To A Group Home

I just had an interview to go to group home where I can meet a lot of new people I don't know and I will be able to see new things that I have not seen before. I will try to make my time go by fast. I will go home a changed person that don't do the same thing I've been doing.

-Yogi

From The Beat: You have a great attitude toward being eager for new experiences. If you don't need to go to a group home and can go home, do you have cousins, friends you can visit during summer school vacation, hang with them, and see how they live differently, care about other things, than you do?

I Love Guns But They Get You In Trouble

I own guns and I love them like a son or daughter, but they do get you in a lot of trouble, though. In this country you don't need a banga, really, but in other cities, you definitely need to pack a heater. But for now, it's good. Late.

-J-R

From The Beat: Guns can get you in the ultimate trouble—25 to an L or, in this state, execution. Why do you love guns? Why don't you write an essay for The Beat about how guns make you feel different about yourself or the world?

Reese's Pieces

Reese's Pieces
 Butter Cup
 You mess with me
 I'll mess you up

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: How can you "make things right" without physically hurting them? Withdraw from them?

Somewhat Changed Me A Lil'

I'm matured now
 I've learned to be patient
 And keep my loud mouth silent
 People look at me different
 Wit' a smile
 Instead of a frown
 I'm not fully changed
 But I'm taking each day by day
 Learning as I go on

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: You're doing a great job of growing into a young woman. It's got to be difficult. You lead with your heart, but also have a good mind and a sense of humor.

Boys

Gosh, I can't stand boys
 They so stupid
 I swear, everything goes
 In one ear and out the other
 They gossip more than beezies
 Always repeating shhh they heard
 But not knowing if it's true or not
 Boys just need to grow up
 And move on
 And get a damn life
 Keep names out yah mouths

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: That's one way many people learn from each other what the world's about, what's possible, what's fair, what has happened and how to cope. But gossip, no matter who does it, can also show the person is insecure, because gossip can often be cruel.

Family

Family means more than the definition they give it. It's more than a six-letter word. My family means everything to me. It's more than just relations having the same blood. I'll kill for my family. I'll die for my family. I live for my family.

-Julio

From The Beat: You sound like you're truly a devoted, loving, son, brother, etc. When you go home, how will you help out your family? How have they been managing without you?

ALYSSA

Artist
Loving
Yee sum
Silly
Strong
Amazing

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: So these many qualities constitute the true Alyssa

Somebody Gettin' Robbed

Somebody gettin' robbed
He just don't know it yet
But he gettin' robbed
I tried to tell him
But he gettin' robbed
He don't believe me
But he gettin' robbed
He soft
But he gettin' robbed
We know he rich
So he gettin' robbed
I told him I was crazy
So he gettin' robbed
His mom like me
So I'm still gonna rob him
He think he funny
But he a biter (copies people)
This ninja is weak
So he gettin' robbed
He think he cool with me
But he still gettin' robbed
God damn, man
How stupid could
This person be?
I ain't got nothin' against this person
But this one I do
I'm from the hood
So he gettin' robbed
Is he stupid?
'Cause I told him
He gettin' robbed
Now he tryin' to talk shhh
So he definitely 'bout to get robbed
He said he way gonna shoot me
That's a threat
So that's some stupid shhh
So he still gettin' robbed

-Jade

From The Beat: You really can rap, like you said you could! Whether you really intend to rob someone, or whether it's just a rap fantasy, we can't tell. If you are really thinking about robbing, please think again. Nobody has anything you need so badly that you have to rob him/her for it, right? If that is where your mind is, we hope you do not get out anytime soon.

Everyday Thang

Man, I think about the same thing every day, thinkin' thinkin', not a thang has changed. All the times it's the same. Hoping I get out on the bracelet.

-Cesar

From The Beat: What are you going to do about the sameness of your life every day? You sound bored. Even if you're stuck inside the house because you're on the bracelet, you can read, write, play games, stand on your head, wash dishes, watch TV, draw, hang with your friends, etc., because you're free!

I Need

I need so many drugs, dammit
I'm fiending fo' some "ya"
I need to get out.
Shhh, I need help.
I just wanna scream
I'm going crazy
Outta my mind

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: We can feel your pain. What's going on that's driving you so nuts? Since you have no access to drugs in juvy, what can you do to calm down and chill out? Can you also use that method when you're back home again? Don't blow your freedom!

What's Good?

What's good wit' it, Beat? Yah, feel yah girl, Queen Bee, back once again. Time is rough right now. I ran from my group home out in Redding. That shhh was boosie bunk. That shhh wasn't for me, but I can't lie, I was still doing me out there, had me a boo or two. LOL. Had one wrapped around my finger—too bad I left.

I have court again December 10th. I'm going to another placement somewhere in Susanville or by Reno. I'ma try to do good, 'cause my next stop is Colorado, and plus, I only have ten months 'til I'm eighteen. Ahhhh... Damn... But yah feel me, I'm gonna make it through this hard nonsense phase. It ain't nothing to a boss/queen.

-Alyssa

From The Beat: Whatever group home you go to, why don't you learn all you can from it? You'll meet new people who can become your friends, learn new ways you can develop your artistic skills.

Queen Bee

Pretty as can be
Takes no shhh
Always in beef
Crazee as hell
Also hates Taco Bell

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: There are a whole lot of ways to deal with "shhh." You can be quick witted, laugh at the person trying to mess with you, ignore him/her, walk away.

Dream

What's good? Come over so I can tell you a lil' secret. I'm in love with this person, but I don't know how to tell him, 'cause I'm scared to, 'cause I'm scared to accept the trust. That I was just dreaming and that's all I'm gonna continue to do.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Why do you feel you have to tell this person you love him/her? Can you let him/her know without words? What trust do you think revealing how you feel implies? You have to trust him/her? S/he should now trust you? Until it's obvious to you what how this person feels about you, maybe dreaming is a terrific solution for you for now.

Return To Yesterday

One day just chillin' after school with some hynas making posters trying to do good, and after I head to the bus stop I see a homie and I post up with him. He asked me for a cigarette, so we smoke one, and there were cops across the street messing with people.

They had 8 people on the curb for jay walking and we were laughing 'cause the people were not listening to the cops. Then the cops came and messed with us, and I had my hand behind my back and the cops thought I had a weapon. I showed them the cigarette, and they put my hands behind my head and slammed my face on the wall.

I said "what the hell are you doing" and the cop punched me and elbowed my face into the bus stop then handcuffed me and I sat on the ground and then they slammed my homie.

I wish I can go back and not have cussed 'cause this might be my last chance, and I got arrested for something so stupid.

-TroublesOne

From The Beat: It's always hard to believe when police are using excessive force, but then there are always two sides to every story. Now that it is said and done there is no going back, and the past can not be changed. The only thing you can do now is change your future. The choice is all on you.

I said "what the hell are you doing" and the cop punched me and elbowed my face into the bus stop then handcuffed me and I sat on the ground and then they slammed my homie.

Lilacs

Purple little flowers dancing in the bushes
Do you smell the fragrance?
Climbing up your nose
Sun shining on your cheeks
Do you feel the pain?
Going all through your veins
Tears running down your sweet rosy face
Eyes widening from all the horror
Tap dancing in your brain
Your adrenalin is rushing
It's only the monster
Tell him to stay!

-Raquel

From The Beat: This was a wonderful poem, but it was a bit confusing. There was much to try and figure out in so few words. Tell us more of your love for lilacs, and tell us of the "horror" this "monster" is causing. Find a way to open up before it's too late.

P Here

I'm really tired of this mess.
I am tired of the crooked cops trying to harass me.
The whole world is screwed up, so why are the cops messing with me so much?
I hate how they try to play the good cop, bad cop.
The streets are cold enough without crooked cops.
We have enough prostitutes, meth addicts, and criminals in this county.
Why do the cops make it worse by ruining families?
I think that they are whacked.
I really want to get out and smoke at least an eighth.
Man, I love dank, like purple and dense hairy buds.
I'm going to burn it and drink 40 oz. Old English.
Well, to all doing time, stay up and keep your heads up.

-P

From The Beat: If you are really "tired of this mess", as you say - stop blaming others for what you, yourself, have created. Last we knew, it was still illegal for minors to be chugging 40s and smoking dope.

Fear, Troubles, Mercy

I look at the clock in fear.
It's time to put in dirt.
I smoke to relieve my troubles
and never question why I love my numbers.
My choices have been consistent.
And I learned not to have mercy on punks.

-Bb

From The Beat: We think you should rethink your choices. After all, look where you are. Look around you. Juvenile Hall can be described in many ways. One way to describe it is as a collection-center of ill-considered choices, bad choices. You won't have to be afraid of the clock if your choices are well intentioned and your behavior is honest. But we must add that we admire your poem. It is skillfully written.

My Day

My day today was OK. We had Juan from Barrios Unidos come in and do the Boy's Club with us. We also had a guest speaker come and talk to us about County Jail. We had cool staff working today. We didn't lose many points.

Then we kicked it with Dennis The Menace from The Beat and we had lots of laughs. Shout out to Dennis. He is a bunch of laughs and he always makes it a good Friday. Dennis is a savage. Well, that's it for today. Hope this makes The Beat. Later.

-B

From The Beat: We're glad you had a good day, and we're glad our man Dennis makes you laugh. We hear he can be pretty corny sometimes. Do well. Be good.

My Hat

If I could go back, I would go back to when I was pulled over and I would have hid my hat in a bush or something.

-Ruben

From The Beat: Explain further. What is up with your hat?

RIP, 'Lil Rob

Today I am going to write about killing. I only have a few things to say. They got my bro- Lil Rob. RIP, homie. I miss you. We all love you, dude. I know you're right next to God. They killed you over a girl. I wish I was there with you.

I'm looking at a two year court commit or going to Wyoming for two.

RIP Lil Rob and RIP Tyler. I miss you both.

-Zack

From The Beat: We are very sorry for the loss of your friends. While you are spending the next two years of your life in one form of custody, or another, we urge you to think deeply about how you've found yourself in this situation. Two friends dead from senseless violence, and two more years of your life having to ask for permission to do basic things. You are a very bright fellow, certainly bright enough to look deeply into your life and figure out that real change is needed. We'd love to hear from you, now and then, wherever you are. You have a lot to offer the world, and yourself, Zach. Wake up. Take your life seriously.

About Guns

Guns are violence. There will always be guns and violence in this world. There's nothing we can do about it. We can't stop it. I don't know what it feels like to have a gun. I'd rather use my fists instead of a gun. It would be better if there were no violence at all.

-Marino

From The Beat: If people said no to violence, then there wouldn't be any. Most of us get introduced to violence at an early age, via TV, and some of us are forced to experience it, in our own homes. You're right about it being difficult to avoid. But we certainly do not believe that it's inevitable. We could and should teach all children that violence is an inappropriate way to attempt to solve a problem. That there are so many people who choose not to be violent is proof that violence is actually a choice, not an inevitability. Too many of us are not choosing wisely. It certainly would be better, as you say, if there were no violence at all. Do your part to put violence on the endangered species list. Practice non-violence. It just might become contagious.

About Guns

Guns... I've never had one. I've seen one on TV, that all. I don't know how it feels to have a gun. Guns don't kill people, people kill people.

My Beat Within has never come up since the first time I came to juvenile hall.

-Josue

From The Beat: Yes, people kill people, but quite often with guns. That's what it's all about in this country. Hardly anyone in the United States needs to hunt wild game to survive. Guns in America are for intimidating, or injuring, or killing other people. This is probably the only country in the world where a young person could easily find a gun. Why do you suppose that is. As for your writings not showing up in The Beat, we apologize. There was a mix-up in communication and you will soon see the backlog in The Beat.

Guns

Today I'm going to write about one of my experiences when I was a seven-year-old kid. Well, one day I was going to my house from school and I was walking by myself. I passed by a garbage can and there were a lot of things popping out of it. I went to check it out and I found a mouse and a keyboard. I got distracted and stayed there for almost 30 minutes.

I also found a gun. It was real, so I threw it in my backpack and took it home with me. My mom and dad found it in my room and took it. Then they asked me a lot of questions.

-Rafael

From The Beat: We're glad your dad and mom found that gun in your room. It might have been loaded. We wonder how you knew it was a real gun, at the age of 7. Anyway, this is quite the story. We're very glad no one got hurt. That was a close call.

How I Would Of Handled My Situation

If I could go back in time, I would have stayed home and come into juvenile hall with just a violation instead of coming here with a felony. Now I'm going to a group home for six months. Hopefully everything goes well and I can graduate and stay sober.

-Ruben

From The Beat: Congratulations! You are the only person this week that has accepted responsibility for his own actions. That is a very mature attitude and the first step to getting your life together and keeping your freedom. There's no doubt that some circumstances in your life may be tough, but you do have the choice to rise above those things and do anything you want in life.

Just Don't Care Anymore

Every single time I'm walking around in my town, it feels like I'm getting followed. Not by my parents or my enemies, but by the cops who always cruise through my streets looking for someone to arrest. I'm always running from the law. I get accused of things that I don't do. I just don't care anymore. I just keep my head up and don't look down no matter who walks by. Maybe that's why I get into fights.

I post all day until it gets real late at night. I get high... that's something I can't stop even if I try. Somehow I just end up high. I can't stop doing what I do because that's who I am. I choose the life I am living. I'm never going to change 'til I die.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: You can't have it both ways. You obviously don't like being accused of things you haven't done. But at the same time, you're telling us about things that you do that any cop would arrest you for. We don't believe you when you say "I can't stop doing what I do because that's who I am." You are more than a robot. You may, as you say, choose not to stop. But you could also choose to stop.

TRUST

Well, I'm going to write about trust. Well, to me, there is no such thing as trust. The reason I came into the hall this time is that I got snitched on by an older cat, he's 22 years old.

I thought he was my homie, but I thought wrong. Well, all I have to say is that I hope he gets what is coming to him. I'm heated. I'm looking at court commit, Wyoming, or ROP.

Right now I don't trust anyone; I won't for the rest of my life. The last thing I want to say is... stop snitching.

-Zach

From The Beat: We are sorry that you have had reason to distrust people close to you. You may be right to choose your confidants carefully, but you have to accept the real blame. You know better by now. The reason you came to the hall this time is that you made a poor choice - that caused your trouble. Until you accept that and decide to chance your own life, you will continue to live your life locked up. You can change that. It's not too late.

Getting Caught

I would go back to the time of when I got caught. I should have hopped the fence to the homie's yard and hid in his pad. But no, I had to jump the front fence and hop in the car. But that's what I get for not running. That's where I messed up.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It seems that you messed up long before you started running, starting with the decisions you made that got you into trouble. Eventually you have to stop running away from the police, and especially, away from yourself. Stand still and think about your choices before you make them... you are sure to stay out of the hall and have control over your own life.

My Life In Juvie

My life in juvie is a whole new learning experience. I hope to make a difference by learning from my mistakes and taking the right turn to a better life. There are three changes I want to make to start my new beginning.

- 1: Start back in school
- 2: Get a job
- 3: Accomplish the terms of my probation so I can get off probation.

-Colten

From The Beat: Those are good things to do. And each of those objectives, or goals, should be accompanied by a plan. For instance - wanting to get a job is good, but how will you go about it? Make a list of the various ways you might land that job. It probably means looking in the newspaper, and maybe on-line. It will mean knocking on doors. It will also mean getting a letter or two or three of recommendation, to accompany the applications you will be asked to fill out. Etc. We wish you great good luck. Work hard.

Dear Beat

I'm really tired of the crappy food and all of these guards who act so crude. They really don't care if you get out or not. They just get off by harassing you a lot.

We all really hate it when we get caught. It always turns out the way you think, like when you picture getting high, then you get caught by a cop. Looks like I'm out. I'm a go, no doubt. Leaving Lucy's food, these dudes... always crude.

-Lil' Mc

From The Beat: We know a lot of your 'guards' and we think you're exaggerating, greatly. The staff we know want all of you guys to get out and stay out. We notice that your piece is really a poem. And you can stretch language a lot, in a poem. But you can't stretch the truth. Now, having said that, we also want to say that you're a pretty good writer, and we'd like to see more of your stuff.

Goin' Back To Rehab

I'm going back to my old rehab again. Probation gave me a choice: either I could do 3 months and go back home but still be on probation, or go to rehab for 7 more months (my 18th birthday). Then I will be eligible for a program that will give me a \$5000 grant for college and help me to pay my rent until I'm 25.

Also, my grandparents said that if I do the 7 month program they will buy me a car on my 18th birthday when I get out. Also, I'd be off of probation when I get out. So, I chose to do the whole 7 months so I can get all of those things. It would be better for my sobriety any way.

Three months wouldn't do much to help me. I'd probably start drinking again when I got out, because my alcohol addiction is strong.

Well, I'm leaving Monday... only 3 more days! I'm stoked to finally be leaving but also really nervous to go back to my rehab. I've already been there like 4 times. Either I ran or got kicked out. I don't know... I'm just trippin' because 7 months is a long time. I just hope it all goes good and time passes quickly. I really am over coming to this hall.

I'm over living on the streets and puking up stomach acid because I NEED whiskey. I'm just over it and I want better for myself. Besides, I'm too crazy when I'm drunk anyway. Well, wish me luck. I'm out!

To all you who are locked up: stay up, stay out and make some changes, unless you like wearing other people's underwear!

-Shay

From The Beat: Shay, we can't say much that you haven't heard a dozen times before. We wish you the very best. Stick with it. The rewards are worth it.

Labeled

Ever since I was young, they labeled me as "gang-related". I told them that I wasn't, but they still said that I was affiliated with gangs.

At a very young age, the cops put me down... all because of where I was from. The cops talked smack and a lot of crap about me. My mom was always there for me but she couldn't stop that. I decided to stand up for myself, but the cops just put me in a cell. So I keep my head up and refuse to fall. When things get bad, all I make is one call.

I try to make things right, that's why I fight. I'll never stop until I'm on the floor. I hate all of the racists, thinking that they are better. I stand out like a mighty Aztec feather. I refuse to be put down, that's why they hate. My soul is something you can't put in a crate.

-Maldito

From The Beat: We're glad that you are not affiliated with a gang. What's just as important, though, is not to act as if you were. We don't know what the whole story is, but you must have given the police some reason to suspect you. Every officer is a human being, and all human beings make mistakes. So maybe mistakes were made. Again, we don't know the whole story. What can you do to demonstrate that you are simply a proud young man and not a young gangster? And always make sure, if you are going to 'fight', that you are fighting for what is right. You've heard that old saying: pride comes before the fall. Think hard about what you can do to demonstrate that your intentions are good and that your behavior is too. And when you make a mistake, admit it, and start over.

My Friends Are My Family

I'm dealing with getting out of the group home so I can get it over with. I want to get out so I can see my family. When I get out I'm going to try to not get caught and get sent back in here. My friends are my family and I can't leave them. I feel comfortable with them because they have had my back since day one.

-Ronnie

From The Beat: If you don't want to 'get caught', stop doing things that get you into trouble. When you're walking the right path, you don't have to worry about someone having your back. You are your own back. We wish you well.

Tall And Hard

I sit tall as a tower.
My heart is hard, like stone.
I inhale the smoke and wish for trouble.
I am without patience.
Time to make a choice.

-Mainey

From The Beat: We have heard that stones, carried in the pockets of people who do good deeds, turn to seeds. And that wherever the seeds are planted, good things grow there. Have you heard that story?

Ready Or Not?

America ain't ready for a black president. Everybody knows that the USA is the most racist country in the world. There were many groups all over the country who did not want Barack to win. When he did, many places all over the world were happy.

I'm happy that Barack won, because if McCain had won, that would have been like another Bush, with power. Peace.

-W

From The Beat: We are very happy to offer you a forum to express your political opinions. We also think it's important to realize that not everyone who voted against Obama did so for racist reasons. Thankfully, we've made a lot of progress in race relations in this country. We look forward to the day when race is never an issue in this country.

Common Sense

When I hear the word common sense I hear mom telling me to quit acting stupid. Obviously I didn't listen to her because look where I'm at!

I think if I would have used my "common sense" then I would not be writing this topic today for an example, say you were walking down the street and you saw a burning house what would you do? One, look for a water hose and try to put it out? Two, just stand there in shock? Or three, call for help?

Well if you're a person with "common sense" you would call for help. So basically if you do not have common sense then you probably keep coming back here and keep making the same mistakes. So if you don't have any "common sense" you better find it because it will get you in a better place than this trust me.

-Cash Money

From The Beat: We think common sense is best pointed out by the adults in your life as you grow up...this "sense" needs to be acknowledged and encouraged. It's never too late to listen for, and develop your common sense.

Me and My Friend

One time me and my friend had a gun and we were walking the streets with it and we were looking for the people that were driven around looking for pedo.

When they pulled up the homie started blastin' windows were shattering the whole thing was loco and we started running when he emptied the whole 6 out of the 38 and we heard sirens and we just let the streets cool off and chilled out at his house.

The next day we were out of town in another city chillen drinkin' mickys and kickin' it with some hynas and you know the rest. -Erased Name

From The Beat: Actually the rest hasn't all even happened yet. You have a lifetime to live with this. It seems easy when you can't see who you're hurting behind the glass shattering. Even if you boasted about it then, felt like the man, etc. you'll have to live with it for the rest of your life, and who knows how it will play out. What if you fall in love with the sister of someone you shot? That's just a Hollywood example. There's many more. What if it happens over and over in your dreams? We Don't Need Guns I think we don't need guns in our community because when we bring guns into our lives a lot of people get hurt like our families and friends and sometimes you can end up behind bars for the rest of your life.

-Thinking Man

From The Beat: We don't often hear gun stories where any good was done, so we agree with you. How can we get them out of our communities?

Gun Violence

Guns are not toys you shouldn't play with them. But on the flip side guns are protection. I'm a relative of a person who loss their life due to gun violence. And I was pretty close to the person.

Should I carry a gun? No but I do at times for my protection because now days you don't know who you can trust and I hate to feel that way but that's just how it is. But to keep it real. I don't think I had a gun of my own until that in particular happened.

-Markoo

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. It seems messed up that the response to a loved one losing their life to gun violence is to feel the need to purchase a gun yourself. If we don't know who we can trust, isn't it worse if everyone is carrying guns?

Weirdest Food That I Ever Tasted

The weirdest food that I ever tasted was pancakes with butter, peanut butter, and syrup. I thought that is was disgusting until today, when I tasted it for the first time. It was great. Now every time I eat pancakes I'm gonna try to get peanut butter to go with it.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: Okay we're going to have to try that too.

Through Life

Isolated, the more I go through life I want to be separated from majority. If it could be left up to me I would only associate with family. Three best friends, three good siss, and one good bra would be part of my remedy. As I do me through life amazingly I become more and more light of attention from people you can say I'm not concern of so I pay little attention.

Man I know its tens of thousands maybe millions who been in my situation. And yo life feeling like I do but don't even mention. But through life don't think I ain't happy but don't think I'm unhappy just think what you might be uh hater, an actor, or a real factor. As I go through life I've seen too many of the first two, so that's why I only associate with family, My remedy as I go through life.

-Lil' Nite

From The Beat: We hope it's working out for you out there, Lil' Nite!

What's On The Menu?

Wuz good Beat? I wanna talk about weird foods my mom makes a lot of Mexican dinners. I don't think they're weird though.

I get out in two days so I'm really looking forward to some enchiladas, or maybe a huge plate of some albondigas. I got to go home for Thanksgiving. We had turkey, like every other year.

But yeah... I love my momma's cooking. She makes the best-fried shrimp ever. I can't wait to go home and have me some real food. Home made food! Well, that's all I can think about so yeah... late Beat.

-Carlos

From The Beat: You're lucky. We had to google "albondigas" to find out they're meatballs!

Fights

All I do while in this juvenile hall
Is sit in this room and stare at these walls
And I wish I never done what I did at all
I think I could've been gone in a month or two
If I did exactly what I had to
And heck with all the people who don't like me
And much love to the ones that do
But what people think don't really matter
Cause what they say normally aint even a factor
it's not really hard to get my head pumped
especially when someone calls me a punk
it's like an easy test that I normally fail anyway
I always get into fights over what people say
Just to prove that I ain't one in some of way
So all I do while in this juvenile hall
Is sit in this room and stare at these walls.

Lil' J

From The Beat: Well it doesn't sound like you're happy with the way you react to people's nonsense. Maybe you could get some help with this... people do learn to respond, instead of react...with hard work and time.

Weapons

Why we carry guns? To survive and earn our stripes, most gang members carry guns. You also got knives too. Anything can really be used to kill a person. Why would I want to kill someone? To put my dirt for my hood.

A person step out of line got to show them not to mess with my kind. That's why we don't got know enemies running around our town. It feels better that you could go around and no one's on our block.

It's cracking out there if you know the right people. I do what I do for the homeboys and if my kids want to do the same thing. This just a little bit of my mind.

-Young Thoughts

From The Beat: Well we edited your name because this could incriminate you. This cold attitude goes for you and those you love too right? All the enemies can't be dead or there wouldn't be a war. There will always be new kids growing into it right? We don't think you will feel this way when you really have your own kids, we don't believe their lives will mean this little to you.

Apathetic Rebellion

Reckless piracy Cataclysm Defiance! Revolt ness! Instrumentation, performance Destroy! Use, waste, forget Strange, unfathomable, mysterious, magical Chaos! Chaos! Turmoil Revolution, violence, destruction Selfish? BROKEN HEART! Passion, anger, hateful, cross Rebuttle, defend, broadcast and fight Or forever hold your peace Forgetfulness Rehabilitation, rejuvenation! Humble? Legit? Perceptibility

-Lizy

From The Beat: Hmm lots of events crashing into one another. Humility, love, creativity, spontaneity, surprises, life, music, integrity, truth, light.

Like Him

I think gun violence or violence period is ignorance. I think that people who do violence or like violence need serious help. Everyday I'm in my room thinking about people in this hectic world, when would ignorant people start manning up and be a leader instead of a follower.

I mean put it this way take Obama for instance, people cross the state didn't think he was gonna be president because of his race but when I start giving this wonderful speech about he was going to help the mentally disabled, the poor and help people with jobs...

All they need to be is like him, a man of integrity, empathy, and sympathy. If we try to be like him there wouldn't be no gun violence.

-Cash Money

From The Beat: Obama was able to make a lot from the opportunities he had, though he didn't start with much. We agree that there might be less violence if people could somehow be more like him.

Guns Ain't Good

Well yea guns ain't no joke I remember when I first got a gun. I bought it because the block was getting hectic--that some night my friend was hurt and part of me wanted to ride.

But I was also thinking that I don't have a shot. A couple of days later my mom found out I had a gun--and a couple days later I got caught up with it and that's why I'm in here.

-Could Have Been Worse

From The Beat: It sounds like the whole process didn't take much time at all. Maybe you're lucky you were stopped before you used it in any way you'd regret for the rest of your life.

On tha Floor

I think feesh is a weird food. If I ain't dead don't eat it that's what someone once told me. One time I tried to eat a lil' fish thing in here but I almost threw that on tha floor so I just eat my candy from class. So when my homie gives me some sour patches I just say si'mon!!!

-Gino

From The Beat: Well, you don't have to eat anything you don't want to. It's always good to try things though...

Last Of My Days

I get out on Saturday when it's my birthday. I turn 18 and I'm out that very same day. 9 o'clock in the morning walking out these doors. Can't wait until I'm free and not going to be bored. I'ma be a free man no probation nothing at all going to do it right and just stand tall.

My birthday with Teme Mea Mea and Fae will be great. I will do the best that I can do have a great fate What to do when I get out is a great question. Doing good be great are both good suggestions. Be a great baby daddy and an excellent father. I won't get in any trouble so don't even bother Doing good being a great person in society Well good luck to all and stay strong. Words of advice stay solid it won't be long I'ma do me so The Beat stay up so please Beat wish me luck.

-Sean, The Pacific Islander

From The Beat: We imagine you are working at life, day by day, glad to be wherever you are. If you see this contact us and let us know what's up!

Yappin' they Gums

Wassup Beat, this ya boy Curious George from New Founds. My main concern is my family. My hood is my family. Everybody stay talkin, but it never hurts. Just irritates me.

But I'mma keep cool and get back to B. It's money season, and it's time to get it. But I'm gone Beat. Also gotta get back to my lady.

-Curious George

From The Beat: We edited because we can't allow you to threaten anyone in these pages. The Beat is about exploring positive options to the negativity you've had to live with. How could you get money legitimately? What are you good at that's legal?

Good and Long

Hi Murmur, again I'm bored with jail. It's absolutely, positively, boring. I'm getting terminated in three months, but I have to be locked up until then.

O well life goes on! I can't wait until I get out! ! I'm going to be free, FREEDOM!! Yay! I'm going to get a job, and an apartment, and live my life good and long with the people I love. Hopefully I can stay out of trouble. Hopefully...Whatever.

I'm just glad today that I saw someone I love that I haven't seen in a while. That made me happy. I guess I just have to think about everything that makes me happy, and live day by day. Well remember, I LOVE YOU!

-Murmur

From The Beat: We like your enthusiasm for life, and freedom. Don't forget how much you appreciated it when you are released, and hopefully that will help you make the choices you need to, to stay out of trouble. They say that what you appreciate grows, so keep thinking about what makes you happy!

What We Do

What's crackin' wit it Beat? Me just doing this time like nothing. I was with my homeboys on turkey day. Made me not want to come back to New-Found.

Came back was chillen on bunk thinking about all the different stuff we did on the outs found out my boy got caught up for some bad charges in shhh. He gets to switch to county da 10th on his birthday. It's how the life is you feel me just doing what we do to earn stripes and shhh.

Wonder how it's going to be when I get out. About to do the same shhh you know. Hope I don't get caught up again but if I do you I'm going to do da time like nothing.

Saw my boy, he getting bigger and shhh. Wish he up in here with me be cracking. I'm going to bounce be and my room thinking about the good times.

-Stunkey

From The Beat: Dear Stunkey, it always takes us a long time to figure out how to respond to you...because as you say you're "about to do the same shhh..." and we feel your enthusiasm for your boys. We understand how important it is for you to have close partners and a strong community around you. We encourage you to think about how that emotional support helps sustain you, that deep, real friendship. The fact is relationships like that don't have to involve "putting in work," illegal activity, possible death and jail time. Choose life!!

Mystery My Days Like Spent Rose Petals

Escape My Grasp and fill My Sky
Loves Remains My Unknown Sanctuary
Thus My Long Journey Continues
Wandering Apace With My Two Constant
Companions: My Red Sky and My blue Heart!

-Little Skittles

From The Beat: At least you loved right? It's the loving that's important, not necessarily what you end up with—though it is important to find reciprocal relationships...

Guns

Guns ain't no joke I've seen a lot of people die from the hands of guns. Me personally I don't have a problem with guns. I think you should have one only for protection tho because sometimes you need more than just your hands to handle problems.

Guns are a big problem in the world. Many people die from the hands of hammas of all kind. Me I want to be in the army so that I could have the right to have one and defend my family.

-Quany

From The Beat: We feel something's gone too cold when people no longer fear the destruction capable from guns. In the Army the "enemy" has weapons too. Why does this have to be the only way we can figure out how to resolve issues? What are we creating like this?

Gun Violence

The first time I seen and held a gun I was twelve years old. My friend asked me if I wanted to see his gun I said yes. then he showed me and I held it just staring at it and after that moment I wanted one of my own.

That time soon came when I robbed a house and found a revolver and as soon as I got home I walked to my backyard and shot it.

-Robert

From The Beat: We think it's important that twelve year olds are introduced into different things than guns. We wish you had been introduced to tools to be creative with in your life, rather than feel powerful through potential destruction. Imagine if this friend had taught you to play a guitar, or fix an engine. How would your life be different?

Real Talk

I'm almost up out of here. I have like 25 days left if my PO lets me out. Hopefully she do because I'm trying to get up out of here real talk. Been locked up since July 18 man can't wait to get out well that all I got to say.

-Bay Star

From The Beat: We hope you have some good plans, and wish you luck!

The First Time

I use to rob people and purse snatch but I didn't use no gun. The first time I used a gun for something I was about fourteen or fifteen. Me and my potnah was going to rob somebody but when me and him was talking about on the phone he said he was going to bring his thang.

He asked me if I had one I said no. When we met up he showed it to me and I asked him to borrow it, he said no but I'll let you use it. I took it from him and start tryna put it on my waist band he laughed at me and said put it in your pocket. So we sat outside until we seen some other kids walking from the park with a basketball so we started walking over and my heart started beating.

We got up to them and asked them if they lived over here they said yea. I asked them where they didn't tell us. They started getting nervous and knew something was going on because we had hoodys on.

I reached in my pocket and pulled the little 22 out and they stepped back and started tryna run but I told them something that I can't write in The Beat and grabbed one by the shirt. My potnah grabbed the other one and my potnah told them to empty out their pockets they had five dollars and some change. My potnah slammed one of them and slapped him up I let the other one go and they both ran. We ran too and went in the house for a couple of hours and changed. The end.

-L

From the Beat: For five dollars and some change? This robbery risked so much for so little; your life, their lives, your freedom... what do you think when you look back on this incident? What if someone pulled this on people you loved...wouldn't you be angry that they endangered their lives, for five dollars? Even if it was somehow 500.00, I wouldn't think you'd want the dough, or anything it could buy after that.

The Beat

What it do Beat just sliding through to say what's good. To all locked down missing out on time on the outs, keep your head up and leveled. My town's got problems like it got baby momas in Hondas! Late night smobbin. Hey man am I driven koo?

-Remy

From The Beat: We know you're out there now. Work hard and take care of yourself!

Weird Foods

Whats up beat? Today I'm on topic weird foods. I just got back to challenge from county jail and in there the friends be spreadin' all day.

Noodles, hot cheetos, rice, beans, hot spicy sausage, jalapeno cheese and tortillas. We all would share our different shares in a big black garbage bags and let it sit for like 10 to 15 minutes. Man Beat, it's the shhh.

Well that's all I got for you this week. Alright Beat.

-Droopy

From The Beat: This is an interesting recipe. We appreciate the creativity and the spirit of sharing and camaraderie it requires.

Live It How I Want To

What's up Beat, it's the homeboy Stunkey again. Chillin on my bunk. Had a visit by my mom today. She said some stuff that I didn't know that been going on for a couple of years... I got stuff in my mind that is going in my life.

For one this is my life and I'm going to live it like I want to. I'm getting to the point where I just don't care no more. I'm in New Founds right now. I got hella time if I mess up again. But I like to live my life as a warrior.

But the only reason why I'm doing good right now is for my mom. She sad all the time and she going through a lot right now. It hurts me to see her cry you know... I ain't going to lie I'm a mamas boy. I will basically kill for her. I remember one time a cop push my mom so I took flight on the cop and got beat up for it that day by the COPS outside and inside my house.

My whole family went to jail that day but that's a different story for another time... Man "when I die in this life of hate I pray to the lord my soul he'll take" I do some dirty stuff at times when I'm in the streets putting down where I'm from. Vacaville streets can get crazy. Most people don't know because they from different towns or cities. You just don't worry about the rivals catching you slipping, you have the cops to worry. Sometimes you can't even get down the street by yourself without getting pulled over. Good luck if you're with four boys and you're all gang members on probation.

You want to know one person I think about every day is my boy. If you read The Beat often you probably remember me talking about him once or twice. I got much love and respect for him. He came in with me and had the same charges--he just took the hit for everybody. They did my boy dirty and the judge sent him to the Y because Fouts didn't want him because he had diabetes. I think that's some mess up shhh.

Instead of nine months he had to do at least two years in there. And he's only 15. I remember laughing and kicking it all night long in her and in the outs with him. That's why I always talk about how I love my boys and will die for them because I know they will do the same. Been with them for four years now and nothing change between us. And the boys know who I'm talking about.

One thing I can't wait to do when I get out is go to my park and post up while inhaling my Jane. I just hope the cops don't interrupt my moment. I know all the homeboys want to do at their favorite spot and have a good time. Without cops interrupting the fun.

Well it's getting late about 11:00pm. To all, this time ain't nothing it's just a little vacation you feel and if you're reading this I love you... do your time don't let it do you so I'm going to say it one more time "this is my life and I'm going to live it how I want to" gone

-Stunkey

From The Beat: We thought you didn't want to see your mother crying anymore? Is posting at the park smoking worth all that pain that it ends up causing her? Why do you say you don't care anymore? In some ways it's easier to give up than figure out another way...but it sounds like your mother needs you. If you could imagine for a second that gangs (and weed) didn't even exist, what would you get up in the morning and do? You might die young in this life, but you also might live a long long time...and what do you want that life to be like? It seems like you do care about your mother.

Father First

Hey Beat what's up my name is Tieki I have been here for 12 days and this is a cool place to be better than the hall. So I'm just sitting back and do my time so I can go home and be with my baby because I want her to know who her daddy is, and not think that any man is her daddy.

Sitting in jail thinking about
All the things I done
Can't wait to be free
And live my life and
Do what I need to
Do to be a father
To my child

-Tiekei

From The Beat: We think if you can keep this attitude up you will have a very Happy New Year!!

Sneak Up Attack

This one time in Vallejo I was at this one party on a Friday and this one dude bumped into me and my bottle that I was holding dropped on the ground and busted all open with drank on the floor.

That made me feel hekka mad so when I saw the dude who bumped into I creped up on the ground and give him a upper right hook to the jaw and his gold teeth came right out his mouth. I seen his teeth fly right by my face they fell right by the dude who I knocked out so he tried to pick his teeth back up until I drop kick his shhh back to the floor.

-Lil-T

From The Beat: Well you're lucky he didn't have a weapon we guess. This doesn't sound like a fun party, where someone can't make a mistake without getting beat. How can you make things better, not worse?

Depression

As I'm writing this, I'm feeling really depressed for many reasons because the life that I live, for memories that keep coming back of the past I wish to control, before even came into this world.

Depression flows though my veins, affecting the most sensitive part of my brain, leaving its scars. Depression scars me, never leave you alone unless you make new memories to cover it up. But even then that the fact is they exist.

-Cash Money

From The Beat: The scars remain and yet your life is new all the time. Let people help you deal with the past, and figure out what to develop about yourself and your life for the future.

Respect

I don't like when people talk about my mom in any type of way, that just hits the spot and I lose my temper and I'll be ready to fight who ever.

I really don't like that, that's why I never talk about nobody moms cause that's nothing to be playing around with. So I advise to people out there don't talk about moms.

-Heard Enough

From The Beat: We agree, the most fights we've seen at ranches etc. started over someone talking about someone else's mother. Even when there's other problems that was the catalyst...Maybe it's like a survival instinct.

Being and The Game

I have seen gun violence. My brother is in a gang and someone shot at my house one time. My sister almost got shot. This isn't no game. I feel like my family is trying to stay alive, so I don't feel bad that they have guns too.

-Jessie

From The Beat: That is how gun violence starts, people arm themselves for protection on both sides, but eventually someone uses them offensively. If neither side had them, they could battle things out with their words and wit instead of their pistols, because nobody wins if everyone is dead.

Goodbye Friend

What's up Beat? Well guess what, my best friend Precious left. I am so sad about it. I feel so lonely. We shared everything together. I just hope that she will be okay. I want to let her know that I love her. She will always be in my heart and in my prayers. Until the next time, peace.

-Radibow

From The Beat: Precious will be missed. She wrote a lot for the Beat. It's hard to see people we care about leave. But we hope that you still choose to participate with us, even though she isn't here. Thanks for all your help lately.

I Don't Like It

Some sushi is good, but some is gross. Raw fish is good, only when you make ceviche. Tofu sounds gross but I never tried it. I have never tried Okra and I don't plan to. I enjoy tacos and pasole. Also, fresh beans with ceso and fresh made tortillas.

-Smeagle

From The Beat: Don't be afraid to try new foods, one person's gross is another's food of choice.

New Beginnings

My whole life I never had a regret about anything. Until last May, when I met her. It is because of her that I am in here and it was the biggest mistake of my life. Now that she is out of my life things are starting to get better, and I don't care about her anymore. As far as I am concerned, she is just another person in the world now.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Meeting people and learning something about yourself from the experience, is never a mistake. But once you realize that some people are better off not in your life, it is good to just let them go.

Gang Affiliated

People think that it is cool to be gang affiliated. But a gang is very stupid because the colors will always be there, even after you pass away. The streets will still be there when you die.

People come and go in and out of prison because they are disrespected on the streets. Others end up dead, like many people in my own family. Some of my other family members still think that it is cool and that their homies will be there when the Shhh goes down.

But the truth is that they are worried about the wrong people, and leaning on them will end up bad for everyone.

-Amber

From The Beat: We think what you are saying is that gang life isn't worth protecting because you loose more in the long run than you gain in the short run. It's hard for people to see that until something devastating happens to them personally. We are glad that you see that, and hope you share that insight with others.

My True Love

My true love is... Well it is crime!
My true love has a steelie inside!
My true love is about twelve inches high!
My true love is one of a kind!
I would turn to my true love at any time!
When ever I am stressed, mad, or even happy
I turn to my true love!
I take all kinds of risks
Because it is my true love!
And can't no one ever stop me
Even the man up above!
I would do anything for my love
Even getting locked up!
My one true love is my number one fun!
If you haven't guessed yet...
My true love is a spray can!
Metallic, candy, flat, or even glossy
No matter what I make it work!
Roof tops, billboards, trains, freeways, and even books!
I show off my skills and people stop to look!
No matter what
My true love is mobbin!

-Gudtymes

From The Beat: Passion is the number one quality of a true artist. But do you really think that most people stop to look at your art because of how good it is, or because of where you put it? If you could get paid to create legal art, and get it out there would you do that? Art is not worth doing if it violates the respect of others in the process.

Don't Go There

There is one thing that I don't like talking to people about, and that is my sister. She passed away on Christmas.

There was one time that my friend was talking about my sister, and he didn't know that she had passed away. I don't know how it all happened but I started hitting him. Later I told him that I was sorry and that I shouldn't have done that.

-Lf

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. It was very big of you to admit that you over reacted. Have you looked into grief counseling yet? There are other ways to grieve besides showing anger.

I Want To Change

I want to change, yes I do want to change a lot just so I can get a job and won't be broke all the time like how I am right now.

-Tony

From The Beat: We hope you take the steps to bring about the change you want. When you get out, what will you do to get a job?

Somewhere At The Wrong Time

There was a time when I went to a party. When I got there I was already drunk. We were having a good time, but there were gang members there that didn't get along. Soon, my friends started banging on each other.

My sister told me to get down, and we were all laughing. Because I was faded I thought I was being shot at, but it wasn't for me. I didn't know what was going on until the next day I realized how serious it had been, but nothing happened to me so it all turned out fine.

-JoJo

From The Beat: You say that it all turned out fine because nothing happened to you. But that is so selfish! If you keep laughing at danger, you will get burned too. Wake up and take responsibility for your self before it is too late!

Take Me To Your Heart

Hiding in the rain and snow
 But I just won't let go
 Sitting just across the street
 Listening to my own heart beat
 So many people around the world
 Tell me where I can find my baby girl.
 Take me to your heart
 Take me to your soul
 Give me just your hand
 Before we both get too old.
 Show me what love is
 Just give me a clue
 Show me one day that it can all be true.
 They say that love can last forever
 But I don't believe no one.
 Take me to your heart
 Take me to your soul
 Give me your hand and hold me tight
 And don't you ever let go.

-John

From The Beat: These are some pretty good rhymes. Love can be a confusing thing, but it can also inspire us to be better people and make something with what little time we have in this world.

Weird Smelly Food

The weirdest food I ever ate was Papi salad. It smelled weird, but it tasted bomb. It has spicy too! They ask you how many peppers you want on it. The more the better. Just because something smells and looks nasty doesn't mean that it is nasty. That's what I think.

-Aispuro

From The Beat: You are brave to try new things. Thanks for sharing.

Guns Suck

Living in my part of Fresno, guns are what you see all of the time. What I think about guns is that they are a waste of time.

-Lil' Panic

From The Beat: We are glad that you do not have a gun yourself, because how is the community supposed to decrease gun violence if everyone is always on the defense.

Gun Life

Guns are not a new thing in my life. In my hood I see people with guns all the time. The first time I ever saw one I was fourteen. My home boy had it. He didn't plan on using it; he just had it for protection. I never held a gun until last month. My boyfriend showed me how to hold it.

At first I never saw the reason for having gun play. My thought is that you are a punk if you can't fight the person and instead you have to shoot them. Until I met my boo. He explains why he carries a gun. It is like this... he lost his best friend / brother over a gun. So it comes down to kill or be killed. No one is going to give you a pass so you shouldn't give anyone else one.

I saw too many things in my life and gun violence isn't going to go no where any time soon if anything it's just going to get worse.

-Guadalupe

From The Beat: Your right, it will keep getting worse if people keep thinking like your boyfriend does. The only way to change is to stop thinking that too wrongs make a right in this world. The way to heal from a loss is not to cause one yourself. You and your boyfriend will learn that the hard way if he doesn't get rid of his gun.

Money

Money was lost
 But now money is found.
 Now that I know
 That money goes around.
 Money is what I face
 Money is what I chase
 Money is real
 And friends are all fake.
 All I really know
 Is that there is money to be made.
 Sugar is light
 And chocolates are dark
 Money can't leave me now
 Because it will just break my heart.
 Hours are long and minutes are short.
 As my seconds pass by, I love money more.

-Nikki

From The Beat: There are many things in life that money can buy, but none of them hold a dime to the things that can't be bought like love, respect, and honor. If you really want to make lots of money you will have to do it legit, that's how you gain the stuff money can't buy.

Wake Up Call

What do you want to do to change; when I get out I'm going to change my life around. Because I have a love one so that means I got to step up and be a father.

I need to quit getting in trouble. I got a family to go home to, so that tells me I have to go home and be a father.

See some young people act like they can't be real fathers. That's a wakeup call telling me to get my life together and be a man.

I look up to my big brother, because he tells me the right things. Like go to school and get a high school diploma. That's important to people, you can't get a job without a high school diploma. He's going to college and he plays football, he's trying to get drafted to the NFL. The end

-Sleepy

From The Beat: Wow, your brother sound like a great role model. It's nice to be able to look up to a positive person. Being a young father defiantly has its challenges; however, it doesn't mean you can't be a great father.

Imagination

Sometimes when I had time to myself away from the hood and the homeboys, I used to go home, pack a blanket, snacks and a notebook.

Then my nephew and I would go to a park, set out our blanket, and lay down until night fall. I would write poetry and stare up at the sky. We would look for shooting stars together and imagine what they look like up close.

-Chasity

From The Beat: We bet your nephew misses those trips with you. It's hard to see the beautiful sky from inside the Hall, remember that the next time you think about doing something that will bring you back here.

Life

I want to get out. All I am waiting for is a foster home to come and get me so I can leave this place.

-Ebony

From The Beat: The system can help you find a home, but it can't help you change your own outlook on things. We hope you do that while you wait.

Cravings

Mmmmm! I love food! All kinds of different foods. Menudo is so delicious, especially with lemon juice and Tapatio sauce. Pozole is also good. It is just like Menudo but without the pig meat. I love all Mexican food" Enchiladas, tostadas, quesadillas, and Chile rellenos.

I like Chinese food too: Orange chicken and Sushi. I also really like good pizza.

-Mayra

From The Beat: Good food is something hard to come by in the Hall, remember that on the outs.

People Cry For Me.

Hi, my name is Amber and I am a young teen. If I could change time I would never come here in the first place. I would never have committed the crimes I did because the consequences are too bad but I pray to God that I get out and when I do, I'm never, never coming back in my life.

People tell me it's very stupid I come back over and over again. My mom is very sad because I'm in here. She cries every night. I'm not only hurting myself, I'm hurting my family that loves me a lot. People cry for me everyday when they say I'm locked up.

-Amber

From The Beat: Sometimes it is easier to just take the pain but we have to stop and think when our destructive actions hurt the ones we love. Changing our lives and living in a better way is not easy. It takes work. We wish you well.

Life Is No Game

Life is no joke.

We got people on the streets addicted to crystal and coke.

You better watch your back before you end up dead from a bullet, from a gun.

Matter of fact better thank God you're still alive maybe you should also pray

Because if it weren't for God you wouldn't be writing this song today.

Keep your head up and stop looking at life in an odd way.

Be careful what you do and say so you don't end up in prison as someone's girl, being called gay. I'm writing this for The Beat within that originated from the Bay.

-Dorian

From The Beat: You've got some talent with rhymes, we hope you write even more for us next time!

My Thoughts

I have been really worried about my upcoming court date because I have to go to trial. I hope that God is there with me because I want him to help me go home to my daughter.

I feel lost without knowing how long I am going to get in the end. I feel that being away from my daughter is making me weak.

I don't know what I am going to do if I find myself still in here after it is all over. My thoughts tell me to beat someone up. But my feelings tell me that it won't make anything better.

-Juanita

From The Beat: It's okay to feel scared, and nervous and angry, those are natural feelings. But it takes courage to take responsibility for your actions, to put others like your daughter first, and to not displace your hurt into others.

Love You Not...

As the days go by

I think about all that we have been through

And the more I think

The more I am missing you.

I think that it seems

Like the bad outweighs the good

Even though it shouldn't

I already knew that it would

And through all of the cheating

You never got caught

That's why I still sit up in here

And say I still love you.

But I really love you not.

-I wheel

From The Beat: Great play on words in this poem! Things are often not what they seem: people, words and even love.

Too Much Pain

Never knew that I would go through

Everything that I am going through.

And most of this pain is not because of me

It is mostly because of you.

You have hurt me so many times

With all of your cheating and all of your lies.

I am in pain everyday

But I still manage to get by.

Everyday it seems like everything is the same

So many regrets and too much pain.

-I Wheel

From The Beat: You are a survivor...no matter how much other people hurt your feelings, you will keep living your life because it's yours. Use the pain to become a better person, and don't let it bring you down.

My Sweet Dream

For my sweetie. I think of you and try to remember the way you smell. If I could only tell you about how the memory of you has taken me through so many hard times then you know how much I care for you Kelly. Please remember me. I hope you still feel for me and are being a good girl. I love you.

-Fatso

From The Beat: It is wonderful to have someone to care for and to think fondly of but never forget that we have to face our situation and deal with our affairs. Nice memories are good but they are helpful if they take us away from dealing with our situation.

Six Hours

I'm about to go home on a furlough and chill. I'm gonna have a good time and kick it with my dad and mom and aunts and grandma. I'm gonna eat some tacos and talk with my family. I need to do my time and go home.

I get released next month. I've been locked up since January. I need to get out for good. I'm about to go home on my first furlough for 6 hours. It's not enough time to do all I want to do so I don't know.

What will I try to do first? All I got to say to kids doing hard time heading to CYA, is I am happy it's you and not me. I have no heart for the fakes that think they're hard. All I got to say is I am out the front door tomorrow.

-Coalinga bound

From The Beat: You are lucky to be able to go home, even if it is just for the afternoon. Your priorities seem to be in the right place. Make the right decisions and do the right things. You can put all this behind you in a months time. We wish you luck and hope you make the right decision. You can turn your life around. There is still time. Enjoy those Tacos.

Things Happen For A Reason

I got locked up because of some crazy crap, but things happen for a reason, so I ain't even trippin'. I've been here for a couple of weeks and I am already bored. I am right here chillin' with the homie, just watching each other's backs.

I am a gang member, and I was raised in the streets of Fresno.

I went to court a couple of days ago and I got sentenced to boot camp. I am going to try to do good so I can go back to my family cause I miss them a lot.

-Serna

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon. It's tough being there, and at boot camp. Do you feel as though you were meant to end up at JJC for a reason? What is that reason?

Speak Up

I have one friend who really is into drinking. She probably drinks a pint of liquor a day. At first things were fine until small things turned into big things and things got out of hand really quickly.

One day, I found the courage to stand up to her and to tell her that enough was enough and it was time to stop. I told her that her life was in danger. When a person has a problem they have to admit that they have a problem and they have to want others help.

-Vanity

From The Beat: Sounds like you did a brave thing standing up to your friend. Learning to show others respect helps us to think more highly of ourselves. We hope you find the strength to stand up to yourself soon too.

Turkey Day 2008

It is rainy and cold
but the weather doesn't matter.
Rain, sleet, snow or hail
won't change your mentality
when you're locked in and stored away.
Heat or cold will not determine
the attitude you'll hold.
I've learned it's what you make it
in this black hole.

-Poundcake

From The Beat: So true. We are the ones who determine our reality. In any situation there are those who are happy and those who are sad, angry or mad. We choose how to react to our everyday situation. Good luck and thank you.

So Screwed Up

I cannot take this crap anymore. It seems like every day the room gets smaller, like it is closing in on me. I ain't got nothing to do here, and this is not changing me into a better person. I feel like a caged animal and the food might as well be dog food. And then some of the staff really they think are the police, and the court won't let me just say that it's screwed up.

Like how all the Judges are white, and the DAs and the "public pretenders" are too. Also, the "public pretenders" (which are supposed to be on your side) are friends with the DAs and the Judge, and they will give you more time.

-Rb

From The Beat: It is frustrating to be stuck there, the room, the staff, the food, the judges and lawyers—but please don't give up! No matter what happens, no matter how frustrated you become, remember you still have your whole future ahead. Don't let them get the best of you. When you have a bad day there, what do you to cheer up?

Being Inside

The reason that I am here today is because of the person who took my dad away from me. I did something bad to them, and now I am in here waiting for court. I worry about my mom, but I keep living my life trying to forget about my dad.

-Salvador

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. Sometimes we think revenge will help make the pain go away, but it doesn't. It just makes things much worse because the pain is still there, even after we have taken vengeance. What positive steps can you take to help yourself heal?

My Boyfriend

I truly love my boyfriend and I believe he loves me too. He tells me he loves me and he expresses it in more than a million ways. I'd do anything in the world for him and it's the same with him.

Not long ago I found out I'm pregnant. So many things go through my mind; excitement and nervousness at the same time but I know it'll be alright.

I love my boyfriend and he loves me too. Soon it won't just be me and him; we'll be a family. I can't wait to get out of here and see him again. I don't feel right without him. It's like I'm not complete. I wait for the day I can look into his eyes and hear him say, "I love you babe!" Only 5 days to go. I love you always Mike.

-Mayra

From The Beat: It is always good to have someone we love and who loves us. We hope it works out for you and you are able to reconnect with your love. Make sure you don't forget about yourself. It's great to get close to someone but it's not enjoyable to be smothered. The time is now to step up and take responsibility!

No Place Like Home

The place I would like to be at in this world is home. Sometimes it is loud there, and sometimes it is not. You can sleep but if you're locked up you can't be home so there's no point of writing about home if you don't even know what's going on there.

The only reason I wrote about home was because I have not been there for a long time. Home has peace, food you can eat anytime, a bathroom, bedroom, a TV, DVDs, a place where you can do what you want, everything. Home has it all. The thing that makes the house peaceful is my little baby girl. I love her and I wish I could see her.

-Chhit

From The Beat: Home is special! Nothing can compare to the simplicity of just being in the comfort of your living room and enjoying TV. It sounds like you have a baby girl at home waiting for you! We hope you get out soon so you can be with her.

I Don't Belong Here

Here I am in this place knowing I didn't do nothing wrong. But I know that to the judge I'm nothing but a criminal.

I also know that some people are unfair, but I guess that's just the way life is, I miss being out with my family. I miss regular school, but I guess I have to stay.

Man I'm just trying to get out of this place. Being in here knowing I did nothing wrong makes me very mad and angry! But I guess that's the way god wanted it, I guess its true life is hard and then you die. My sister isn't pressing charges and my mom isn't either.

-Eric

From The Beat: Being in JJC is not always fun. Being negative and angry isn't going to make things better. Being positive will take you a long ways in life.

Life With No Regrets

I live life with no regrets because what you do you can't take back. Let's say you commit a crime and you get locked up and get one year. There's nothing you can say or do because there is no time machine. So that's why I would squad up and keep moving. I can't tell everyone what to do, but here's some advice, take it or leave it, doesn't matter to me how you live your life, it's your destination.

-Mike

From The Beat: Have you ever thought about the consequences of your actions? Say for example, you know that what you're about to do could lead to something bad—will you still do it? If you think things through carefully before doing it, then you won't need a time machine to go back and fix it.

Life As A Teenage Mother!

Here I am sitting in Juvenile Hall, wondering what's going on with my baby.

How's he doing? When am I going home?

Here I sit suffering the consequences for my actions. Mad because I feel I shouldn't be here but my actions placed me here.

Now I'm thinking if I can go back I would have never did what I did so I can be home with my baby and be a better mother. I can't wait to get home to my baby and start living my life right.

-Tawajanae

From The Beat: We thank you for sharing and there isn't much we can say other than; we hope you can get back to your baby soon.

Change My Life

First of all I never got a chance to change my life. But when I get out of here I'm going back to the hood and I'm going to do what I always do when I get out. But sometimes I do feel like changing and I'm going to try to change my life when I get out of here. And I have to change for my mom because she's the person who gave me this life. I have to show her that I'm grateful for the life she gave me.

-Bryan

From The Beat: Congratulations on realizing the need to change. That's the first step in actually making a change. Now ask yourself, what is it that you want to change about yourself? Finish school? Find a job? Once you've figured that out, then you can lay out an action plan with concrete steps.

For My Mom

I love my mom. She helps me a lot when I'm in a bad mood. She talks to me and explains about why I'm mad. She takes me to the mall- Abercrombie. We go to get Starbucks-Vanilla Bean. My mom takes care of my brother "Lucky." He was born on a Lucky day.

When I get out, I will go take pictures with mom at Fashion Fair and go to the park and play basketball. I want to say "Thank you to my mom-for loving me, for being there for me even though she works two jobs."

My mom works at Macy's and so does my aunt. I have been getting good grades in my classes- A's, B's and I hope my mom is proud of me for that.

-Christy

From The Beat: Well that's very nice that you are so appreciative of your mother. Your mother obviously cares about you and works hard to support you. It's good you get good grades in your class but if you really want to show your gratitude to your mother then we think you should do everything you can to stay out of Juvenile Hall.

Better Recognize

While I was in Juvenile Hall. I met a woman named Ruby. She would come in to do bible studies. I never would have thought she would be so special to me. I never really had love from my mom so I didn't know what motherly love felt like until I met Ruby. She became my mentor when I got out. There was not one day that passed that we wouldn't talk. She showed me what a mom was suppose to be like. She gave me hope. She told me that I was able to overcome whatever I wanted. It was something nobody ever told me before. She is the best thing that has happened in my life. I'm glad God put her in my life.

-Segundo

From The Beat: Yes. Yes. Keep up the good work. Sounds good. You are lucky. We have realized that when we find someone who wants to help us and make us stronger then we should value that relationship and not take it for granted. Thank you for sharing your wonderfully positive experience.

Time

As I wait for time to come to get out I think to myself will I do what I want when I come out. Will I do good or will I end up back in here or will I do what I need to do. Get off probation, but until that time comes only God will know.

-C Man

From The Beat: You're right we can't predict the future; however, we make choices that affect our lives. If you really want to change you can, it will take time but change is achievable.

I'm Sorry

I'm sorry for the things I've done to you.

I'm sorry that I hurt you so much. It started to hurt me.

I wanted to keep you safe and I failed you.

I'm sorry I made you cry.

I'm sorry I got you mad.

I wanted to be with you always but it never happened.

I think of all the good things we had and all the bad things that happened between us.

I'm sorry I was mad at you.

I'm sorry that I wasn't the one to go instead of you.

You will always be in my heart. I will never forget you.

I know you will be set free and to R.I.P.

I'm sorry truly. Sorry for everything that happened but I can promise you this.

You will be set free.

-Bethany

From The Beat: We have been in a place where it was seemingly inconceivable that we would ever one day forgive ourselves. Time, prayer, experience, conversation and more time eventually smoothed it out and we were able to come to terms with our situation. It was important for us not to punish ourselves repeatedly. Even a convicted criminal only gets one punishment. We are only to serve one sentence and at some point we have to free ourselves. We must be set free.

I Made It

If I would ever end up changing my life, for the better, I would never forget the struggles I've been through, or the life I came from. And I would never think that I'm better than someone that was like me because I would know that one day I was once like them.

The reason I would never forget my old memories is because, everyday when I wake up, I could look back and say, "I made it."

-Israel

From The Beat: And you will! Years from now, you will wake up, look back on your youth, think about all the challenges you faced and the struggles you overcame. And you will tell yourself, Israel, exactly what you say here, that you made it.

Burning

I'm burning and I don't know what to do. It's like people don't even recognize you. This feeling is so strong all because you've been in a corner for so long. I seem to be the only one to not need you. But so many people need to see the truth. You kept us strong. When we didn't and refused to move on. So honestly, here's my thanks to you my friend but man, this list will never end.

First off, you created me to be something like you.

Second off, you let me see what being locked up could really do.

Third off, you showed and let me be the person I am, crazy, outgoing and funny.

Fourth, you let me see when you have faith, it skips numbers five, six, seven, eight.

Ninth off, going back in time.

You let me realize and start appreciating you.

That's the truth. I'm still burning and don't know what to do.

Maybe, I should put it out with water or wood or leave it burning the way it should.

Do you know who I'm talking about?

It's God in heaven. Please hear me out.

-Wilheasha

From The Beat: Yes, it is good to feel the fire in the belly and realize the potential of our existence. Don't put it out. Listen to your God. Feed this fire and make it good and never take it for granted.

Trouble

Let me tell you guys about a chapter in my life. I met this girl a few months ago, and we go together. She didn't like how I was making my share in life so I told her that I would stop but then I didn't. I got in trouble at school selling drugs, even though she got me to go to school more and get a job. I messed up. Now she sent me a letter saying she can't be with me anymore because she is tired of me being in trouble.

-GudTym

From The Beat: Sometimes we have to realize that others can not make us be better people, but they can inspire us to be better for ourselves. So what can you do now to help yourself the way she used to?

Dear Beat Within

I'm writing about return to yesterday. If I could back up time and return to yesterday I would change the way I acted. I would straighten my life out so that I wouldn't be in here. But it's all good I'm leaving in two days. That's why I don't want to rewind time. I'm just going to straighten my life out on the outs.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: That's great you're defiantly going towards the right path. Setting goals for yourself will help you straighten your life. Stay positive and change will occur.

When I Go Home

When I go home I am going to get back into school. Then I am going to start helping my mom out more. I don't want to stay away from my family any longer. I miss them a lot. I really miss my little brothers and my sister. I never want to come back here. I am really going to change a lot so that I don't.

-Danielle

From The Beat: Sometimes people can get really home sick in the Hall, and talk about how they never want to come back so they will have to change. Just remind yourself on the outs how you felt in the Hall.

I Should Have Stayed Home.

If I could change back time I would have never committed my crime. I would have stayed home like my mom told me. I would have told my friends I can't go out today. If I would have listened I wouldn't be in here today.

-Danielle

From The Beat: We identify with you. We all make mistakes and do things that we wish we never did. It's important to learn from our mistakes and to implement a new way of thinking and acting so that we do not repeat the same mistake.

Gun Under Grandpa's Bed

I remember seeing a gun underneath my grandpa's bed. I thought it meant my grandpa was bad, but my grandma told me that it wasn't his, it was his friend's. She said he had it so that his friend wouldn't do anything bad with it. That's how I know not to touch a gun.

-Christy

From The Beat: Knowing how to handle a gun correctly is a good thing, being afraid of them is not. But knowing how to handle a weapon and to respect the damage it can cause is what it sounds like your grandparents are doing, and that's a good lesson.

Thug Mansion

In the song, "Thug Mansion," by 2Pac, he describes a paradise, a place where all the true Gs go, a place where you don't have to worry about the fake wannabes. A place to chill and live life like it is supposed to be lived. Where money and everything else means nothing. Where you don't have to be rich or poor and colors don't matter. If there is a place for me it would be with Pac and all the other true Gs that have passed into Thug Mansion.

-D

From The Beat: Sounds like a true paradise! Do you think this place can exist on earth, or is it only a place you feel in your heart?

This Is A Zoo

Being here is like I am at the zoo. People have to tell me what to do but I have to do it. Life is hard. Mom on drugs. People keep hurting me. Love is crazy but when I get out I am the best I can be.

-Jesse

From The Beat: It sucks being locked up but we gotta look at our situation and see what we did and what we shouldn't do. Our life isn't going to change just because we say so.

Done Running

I'm going to write about that I'm going to another group home next week and the sad thing about it is I am going to San Bernardino. It is several plus hours away from here but the good thing is that if I do good, I will go home to my lovely Grandma and my dad.

The reason I have to go to a group home so far away is because I kept running away and going to my boyfriends' house. I can't live with him because he is too old and too bad. So that's why I have to go to a group home. But a good thing about it is I can go home if I do good.

That's my story. I get to go home for good and this time I'm doing good and staying in the group home this time.

-Jessica

From The Beat: We hear you and we know how tough it can be but just sit tight and do the time and go home and live happily ever after. Obviously running ain't working, right? We know how tempting it is to go over the wall but nothing changes. Everything only gets worse. Some things we can't run from.

Sex

Let me tell you this before you get down
I got a little herpes. I got a little AIDS.
I got warts all over my braids
and I ain't done yet.
I got syphilis on my breast.
I got chlamydia.
Let me tell you about this gonorrhea shhh.
When you're headed down south
Trying to put it in your mouth.
Screaming just like "Ouch!"
I know you see the lumps but guess what,
they ain't razor bumps and it's my bad.
I didn't mean to give you herpes.
It ain't my fault you got AIDS when you talk.
And when you spread my legs. Spreading that odor.
I got you in a daze. Sex. Sex. Sex. Now you got AIDS.
Sex.

-Vantaza

From The Beat: We hear you. Sex is not an innocent act. It can be dangerous. Get educated and be smart!

The Eternal Sky

The sky is cool. The sky is blue.
I like looking in the sky cause that's where
everyone goes when people die.
I try not to cry. I don't know why.
When I lie, tears come from my eyes like rain from the
sky

-Shante

From The Beat: We must strive to keep our heart open. The world wants to singe it shut. We must be courageous as we work to keep it open.

My Place

If I could pick a place it would be up in the clouds, and
I would live there with my homie. I would make a skate
park and my neighbor would be God, and we would all
three kick it. I really wish I was there right now.

-Perz

From The Beat: If you could take this image and make it happen down here, how would you go about doing that? Are you saying that the clouds are peaceful, your friends make you happy, and the people you live around are inspiring? How can you make that image good for you in reality?

Going Back

Nothing you should do should be gangster. And if I could go back I would go back to yesterday and revoke the violent activity I partook in.

-Michal

From The Beat: We would like to hear more about your story. What exactly will you do differently in the future?

I Worry

I am worrying about when I get to go home and see my family. I hope I get out soon. I want to be with my family. I don't want to be in here. I am just thinking, when am I going to go home and be with my family? I do not want to come back to this place. Please, this is not for me.

-Aurora

From The Beat: That is unfortunate thing about being locked up; we do not have any say about when we can go. We only have control over the actions that preceded us getting locked up and we have control over the actions we take when we are locked up.

Live With What You Got

Hey readers, this is my story...before you think of doing the wrong thing, think again. Juvenile hall will be coming your way. I have been in and out. It's not fun but it's just what happens.

First, I was here for battery then I joined JDC. That brought me in here again and again. I come back for smoking herb.

Juvenile hall says its the devil or it controls your mind but that's a lie. It's worse. I am only 15 years old and I have been smoking since I was 13...It is so stupid because I am so young and I can't stop at all.

Every time I see it, I smoke it. Weed can take away a lot of things from your life. So, that's what brings you in here. A lot of people think it's so cool to be locked up but once they get here, they see that it's not cool.

Most people in JJC don't graduate with their friends from regular school. You can't see all your family or watch your baby cousins, brothers, sisters or your own kids grow up. So, I say live with what you have, family, friends, great food, a home and a school that you can graduate from. Get a great job and be happy. Live your life and try to do better than before.

-Katrina

From The Beat: Weed takes us down an empty road of wasted time. We'll never get that back and time is all life is. Think of how many people have been arrested just because of a little weed. Respect the power that little smoke owns. There are many groups you can utilize during the process of kicking the emotional dependence on it.

I Want Out

Well, when I get out of here I want to go home.

Well, I'm not going to go home. I am going to go to group home or instead of a group home, I would rather go to a foster home. I am not going to be able to go to my home for a while.

Everyday is a different day for me and everybody else and I want to get out of here so bad. Some people in here like this place and they do not want to get out. I don't know how people could like it in here. I really want to be out for my birthday which is January 28th.

Well, that's all I have to say. There's probably more but I don't know what else to say right now.

-Elisa

From The Beat: People become institutionalized. They get into a system and they get used to it and then they become dependent on it. Break the cycle and skip that groove. You don't need to bust that move. Break out by changing your ways and ways of thinking. Thoughts make actions.

Rough Times And Change

Say, have you got a minute?
If you have please put me in it.
I have something I'd really like to say
I have such a fleet mind
I should share it with man kind
Besides, it goes non stop any way.

Now my toils are all involved
And they are never getting resolved
Being on the block is all I know
Money, sex, and drugs
Are the beef I provoke.
My life is what I take, a joke.

-Aaron

From The Beat: Your beats are sweet in person, we hope that we could capture them in print as well. We wonder if you have any that can inspire others to have hope for their future. Can you share your story with us?

Thank God

If I were given a chance to go back in time, I would. I mean, who wouldn't?
I've grown to the point in life where I realized God does everything for a reason.
But, if I could, I would change the first time I smoked weed.
If I would have made that one big time, that one life changing decision not to get high,
I probably wouldn't be sitting in this cell-pod.
I probably would still be a virgin. I know I would be with my family.
But I've learned not to take anything back in life because I wouldn't have the loving and supportive friends and family I have now.
But I would love to hold on to the fun and silly memories of being high
with my friends and just laughing all my stress off and all the cool friends I made
and most of all the things I have learned.

-Vantaza

From The Beat: It is possible to look at our past and to appreciate everything while ending certain actions. Do you think God wants you to smoke weed? How many of your "friends" would be your friends if you didn't smoke? How many of them would still be your friends if you stopped smoking?

Relaxing

It's not the nicest place in the world but it is the place that I like to chill when I am mad. And this place is at a party with all the homies. We like to kick back and have a smoking session, and that's what I look forward to when I get out.

-Wolf

From The Beat: We wonder if this activity you can't wait to do will increase your chances of ending back in the JJC?

For Angelica

I love playing with her. When she says "momma" it makes me want more and more to want to raise her. When I look at my daughter, I see me all over again but twice as worse. She trips me out. I shouldn't be here. She's missing me. I hope she never forgets me.

-Juanita

From The Beat: She will never forget you. We never forget our Moms but there are many Moms who are not there for their children and all those children want is their Mommy. She needs you more and more and the older she gets the more she will want to know you. You are more than you know.

What Up Beat

Today I want to talk about what is going on in my life. I am getting out of here in a few months because I will be eighteen. So this will be my last time doing time, because if I get caught again I got to go to the real deal.

My brother is almost on the same path as I am, I'm always telling him to stay out of trouble but it is hard when I am in here. I feel like I am being a hypocrite. So far though, he is staying out of trouble. I just want to make sure he doesn't end up like me, that's all.

So when I get out I am going to show him The Beat Within, so he can follow.

-Fain

From The Beat: We think it is great that you will show him The Beat. What else can you show him? How else can you lead by example instead of just telling him?

My Drawing Board

If I had a chance to go back in time, I would change my decisions, and my mind. And since my name defines my actions and hobbies, I would go and help think twice because only I can stop myself.

-Divine artist

From The Beat: What can you do with your skills to show the world that you can make better decisions for the world and for yourself?

Learn From Your Mistake

I finally realize that stealing is bad. When you steal, you feel sad. Sometimes you can work for money. Just remember it is good to try.

-Conner

From The Beat: If stealing makes us sad, what does earning our own money help us to feel?

My Soul

The walls are dark
Painted with sin
Depression and darkness is
Just the start
It goes further, so deep within.

Pain, chaos and love
These thoughts these feelings
Are what shrouds my mind.

Pain is just
It comes so easily
But it is so hard to be rid of
Day in and day out
There is no escape
At least not for me
For others it is a piece of cake

Chaos
It runs the world
It runs our lives
But within chaos
There could be no order

Love
The greatest feeling in
The world
What everyone deserves
What I've spent my life
Searching for what I have found
My only device
My dearest desire
The one who stole my heart
Whom I am engaged to and will
Marry someday.

Pain, chaos, and love
Without one I would
Not be complete
Our souls are all different
Mine was black
But now it is grey
When I get out it will shine
A bright white from the rain.

-Jake

From The Beat: If these three things affect everyone in life, how do happy, healthy people work around them? How does someone avoid pain and chaos while loving themselves? We think you should ponder on this a while.

Appreciation For My Mom

The person that should be recognized is my mom because she is always there for me. She is the one who cooks for me, provides me clothes, and shelter. She loves me and I love her.

I am in the JJC for things I am accused of, but I don't think that I did. My mom is really hurt over it. She should be recognized though, for keeping me in line and doing all her hard work.

-Khaos

From The Beat: We are glad that you have someone to help keep you in line as you say, and we wonder what you are doing to honor her and help her to have hope and faith in you as well?

We'll Make It

When I think of you, I think of we.
You are the only one that keeps me sane,
When I am locked up or out free.
Inside I live in eternal flames,
You cheated once, can it happen again?
When you are upset I tend to cheer you,
When I am distant, I run near you.
When you are emotional, I show you remorse.
I held you down, I held you up,
When you needed I held you with force.
Im'a hold you here, Im'a hold you there,
Im'a hold you no matter the reasons.
Hot, cold, winter, fall,
Im'a hold you no matter the seasons.
Just hold me in your heart like I have you,
And I promise we'll make it together times two.

-Nate One

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing with The Beat. Your beats have passion behind them and we would like to hear what you are passionate about for yourself as well.

A Brother's Love

I have an older brother who is always trying to tell me how to do things to keep me out of trouble, but I have never listened to him.

If I could go back in time I would listen to my brother, because he was telling me how to not get locked up, but I didn't listen and so now I am here.

I want to go to him now and tell him that I am sorry for not taking his advice. When I get out, I will listen to what he tells me from now on.

-Mario

From The Beat: Your brother sounds like he really cares about you and we hope that you do tell and show him that you respect his advice, when you get out.

Hating This Place

On the outs, I felt good and relieved in life. When I came here though, I felt sick and disgusted. I can't believe that I let myself in this place. I feel that I have let myself down.

Man, this place ain't no joke, so those of you that are reading this, keep yourselves out of here, 'cause I just got committed to a boot camp and doing a whole year in that place.

-Froggy

From The Beat: The good thing about making mistakes is that you have the opportunity to learn from them and to do things differently the next time around. Being human comes with making mistakes, being an adult comes with trying to prevent mistakes from happening the best that we can.

My Place

The place for me is my neighborhood. It's nice and quiet there and I can smoke. Once we are done smoking we can mob it around to the stores in our hood. We can stop and eat some munchies, and go to a park or a school to hang out. That's a nice day in my neighborhood.

-Panda

From The Beat: There has to be more productive things that you can get involved in with your neighborhood. What can you and your friends do in your hood to make it a safer place, because doing drugs in it, is not helping.

Which Is Easier?

Is life easier in here or on the outs? I would say that life is easier in the hall because when you are locked up you have a set program and the work in the classroom is easier and all you have to do is to sleep and eat and follow the rules. So if a kid bum would want to get a free meal all they would have to do is to get locked up in the JJC.

And when you are on the outs you have to worry about getting shot or stabbed or jumped, etc. Also, you have to worry about food and shelter, if you don't have a house, (I thank the Lord that I do) because you need somewhere to sleep at night.

-Cj

From The Beat: Living on the outs is tough, no one can argue with that. But there are so many great things that come with freedom. Having the freedom to refuse to be in an environment where bad things can happen to you is a right of all Americans, and life is more worth living if you are the one in control of the agenda of your own life instead of the system.

I Finally Realized

I finally realized that the life I have been living for the last three years is not for me. That life would be in the JJC. At first it did not bug me but as I got older it got boring. Especially because I can see how it affects my mom and other loved ones. Now I am in the JJC doing the maximum time of confinement. Now when I get out I can start my life over again.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Three years is a long time, but it's nothing compared to the time you can have living a happy healthy life when you get out. But you need to take steps to make that happen. So what will you do differently?

It's Easier Being Free

What's up with The Beat?

Well to me, it would be easier to live out there because I am a new man and I have grown up a little bit.

But a couple of months ago, I would have said that it was easier to live in here because I was out of control out there and put myself into danger. I could have been killed dealing with drugs and a lot of other things that I used to do. I used to not eat right, and the hall gave me three meals a day and taught me that I need to eat better to feel better.

So I think that if you are on the outs and messing with drugs and other shhh, it would be better for you to be in the hall, even though I will admit that all the things that I used to do were fun, but just not worth it in the end.

-Seth

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes going in the hall to realize how things could be different on the outside and it sounds like you have hit that point. What do you plan to do on the outs to show the world that you are a changed man?

Living My Life

The life I live is crazy.
Sometimes I feel good and others I feel bad.
Right now I sit in the Hall and just try to be me.
People want to judge me because they don't know me.
I wonder if life could be different because it is crazy.
I still remain a gangsta though.
My mama tried to teach me right, but I guess the street took over.

-Dannett

From The Beat: We wonder if you being gangsta has anything to do with why your life is crazy, and we want to know what you think life would be like if you weren't?

A Cursed Life

My life has been cursed because every time I try to do good, bad things happen, and sometimes good. I hope I can figure it out before it is too late.

I was doing well for several months but then I made a mistake and the charges came and life got worse and worse. I still want to try to do good even though I have no hope or faith. The only thing that keeps me going is my family. I hope that they are a good enough reason to get me though, and keep me out of trouble.

-Mister H

From The Beat: Having hope and faith in yourself is something you do seem to have even though you may not see it. Family is a good motivator, and sometimes being there for them as well, will bring good things in turn.

Denise

When you have a friend, you give her your jacket.
When you have a girl friend, you give her a love bite.
When you have a wife you give her a ring.
But this girl has my heart!

-Love Sick

From The Beat: Having a significant other gives us someone to relate to and to care for beside ourselves; we would like to hear what you are doing to show your appreciation of others through taking care of your life too.

Death On My Back

Over the years, I didn't know what was going on, but death was on my back. After that I got locked up, and that is a fact. I went to court, sat down and listened, but didn't say a word. My mom always told me to listen but it went in one ear and out the other. Back in the day I listened and skated, and never thought I would smoke. I want to get death off my back but I don't know how. Please help.

-Hoy

From The Beat: It sounds like you already know what to do. Back when you listened and you had healthy hobbies you were happier right? What does that tell you now?

There's Places To Be

If you want to go to a place where there will be no sorrow, pain, lust, thieves, or hatred, then give your life to the Lord and you will have that place. It's not guaranteed on Earth, but it will be in heaven. So just believe and stay faithful, because you will never know when your time will come.

-Voker

From The Beat: How does someone give their life to the Lord? What does that mean, and how does it help us get through life on Earth if we may not see its benefits while we are here?

I Pray For Help

Every day I pray to God to forgive me for my sins. I hope that he will give me another chance to go back to my parents and show them that I love them.

Every morning when I wake up I think at first that I am at home, but then realize I am locked up in my cell. I am hoping that my mom and dad are doing good as I pray for help.

- Homesick Kid

From The Beat: Keep your head up Kid, trust that you have the strength to face anything and use every experience as an opportunity to show how courageous and resilient you are no matter what the outcome of your offense may be in the end.

Here For The holidays

Time isn't worth wasting between these doors. Be easy and stay up. Being in this place makes me want to step up my game. I am wasting my time locked up instead of handling my shhh the legit way. I am telling all the others to be with your family during the holidays instead of out on the streets, or you will end up spending them like I am. Think before you act and happy holidays.

-Pretty Boy Bookman

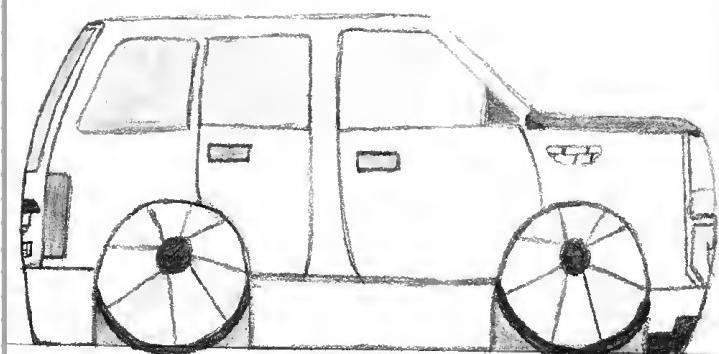
From The Beat: Thanks for sharing. We would like to hear what you plan to do to step up your game? Others may benefit from hearing the steps that you might take.

My Place

The jungle is where I want to be so that I can be free and run around naked. I will be so happy because I am surrounded by beautiful trees and animals. I want to live like Tarzan, ride tigers, and keep a Tucan for a pet. I want to swing from trees and be the king of the jungle and beat my chest at the top of a mountain.

-Andrew

From The Beat: It's good to have an imagination, sometimes it helps us to get through hard times, but we wonder what you could do to turn this fantasy into something productive? Are you saying that you like animals and would like to be around them?



There's A Place For Me

People say that others will go no where in life. People get greedy because they want more and more. My place though, is with my girl, outside of this cement box. There is a place for everyone.

-Lil' H

From The Beat: Sometimes people put others down because they lack faith in themselves. So what can you do to show people that they can be wrong?

Cuando Estoy Aquí

Cuando estoy afuera me puedo poner la talla que yo quiero y el color que quiero, pero cuando estas encerrado no mas te hacen poner lo que los stuff quieren. Te dan ropa m-s chicas y el color más feo y usas la misma ropa de los dem-s.

From The Beat: ¿Y cual vida es la que prefieres una vez que salgas de aqui? Sera el mismo?

When I Am Here

When I am on the outs, I can wear any size of clothing I want and any color I want. But, when you're inside, the staffs make you wear what they want. They give you very small clothes to wear and the worst type too. You also use the same clothes others wear.

-Oso, Santa Clara

From The Beat: So, which life do you prefer when you get out? Would it be the same?

El Nuevo Presidente

Esta bien que le hayan dado la oportunidad de ser presidente de este pais y así mirar si esta preparado para ese gran cargo que se le da. Hay que ver si tiene la capacidad de sacar este pais adelante.

Muchas personas estan sorprendidas porque no creian que un hombre de color iba a hacer el presidente de este pais.

Puede ser que las cosas sean mejor que las que hizo el presidente Bush porque el tiene muchas ideas buenas.

From The Beat: Eso es lo que esperamos. Esperamos que llegue lograr lo que prometio. ¿Y t-, cuales son tus promesas?

The New President

I think it's fine to me that he was given an opportunity to be president of this country and that way we can see if he is prepared to this big challenge that was given to him. We need to see if he is able to make this country succeed.

There are many people who are surprised because they never believed that a colored man was going to become the president of this country.

He may do better things than president Bush because he has better ideas.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope he gets to accomplish what he promised. What are your promises?

Mi Plan

Mi plan es salir para ir a la playa con mi bebe, luego llebarlo a la tiendas a comprales jjijetes, luego llebarlo a la casa, llebarlo al parque y gurar soccer, ybasketball. Me gustaria comprar tamales y chips.

From The Beat: Nos parece buenas idas. Esperamos que llegues a hacer eso y mucho más. Tu bebe se lo merece.

My Plan

My plan is to get out to go to the beach with my kid, later take him to the stores to buy him toys, take him home, to the park to play soccer, basketball. I would also buy some tamales and chips.

-Tony, Santa Clara

From The Beat: They sound like good ideas to us. We hope you get the chance to do all that and much more. Your baby deserves it.

Algun Dia

Que onda raza! No se agüiten paisas. Algún dia vamos a tener que salir de aqui. Las rejas se abren solas. Todos sufrimos esta vida y si no sumfrimos nunca aprendemos. Asi que ponganle muchas ganas y que Dios es el único que puede ayudar a uno a salir pronto de aqui.

From The Beat: Gracias por tus palabras. Recuerda que tambiËn se tiene que poner de su parte para poder salir adelante y no dejar todo en las manos de Dios.

Some Day

What's up my people! Don't worry friends. Some day we will get out of here. The bars open by itself. We all suffer this life and if we never suffer, we never learn. So, keep going and know that God is the only one who can help us get out of here soon.

-Loney Boy, Marin

From The Beat: Thanks for your words. But, always remember that you also have to make an effort to make things better, not just leave everything on God's hands.

Hay Que Enfrentar Tus Problemas

Yo pienso que correr de tus problemas es algo tonto porque siempre va a llegar el momento cuando tengas que enfrentar tus problemas.

Una ve que escuches a alguien mencionar lo que puedes hacer hoy, no lo dejes para mañana. Yo pienso que es mejor tratar de arreglarlos yuir de ellos.

From The Beat: ¿A que conclusion llegastes para aprender esto? ¿Ser-esta experiencia que estas viviendo? oY t- le estas buscando solucion a tus problemas?

Is Better To Confront Your Problems

I think running away from your problems is something dumb because it will always be the moment when you will have to confront your problems.

Once your hear someone mentioned what you can do today, don't leave it for tomorrow. I think it's better to try to solve the problems than running away from them.

-Younster, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What made you realised this? Is it due to the experience you are going through right now? Are you looking for solutions to your life?

Gangs

This week I'm gonna write about drugs en vez de pandillas. I think drugs and gangs are the same because they just make you a pipero (pipe user). Te hacen actuar de diferente formas y hasta aveces te hacer hacerle dano a otras personas (They make you act in different ways and sometimes it make you hurt others) I never been in a gang, but yeah I've been in drugs.

I would say that drugs make you do wrong things in your life. At the beggining, you always say that you can control it, but the truth is that drugs no me controla, eso era lo que yo decia (it doesn't controlled me, but that was what I thought) At the end, I found out that drugs me estaban controlando, so mi consejo es que no hagas a las drogas (were controlling me, so my advice to you is not to do drugs).

-Yonster, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You know what drugs do to us. What are your plans after realising this? Thank you for your advice and er hope you stay away from drugs as well.

La Vida Afuera

Pues, todo bien, sabemos que afuera es la mejor vida porque aquí tu vida la tienes privada y más que nada, no tienes cosas las cuales quieres. Yo tengo 9 meses aquí en USA pero por desgracia caí aquí y extraño la vida de afuera, todo lo que tenía.

Todo lo que encuentre cuando llegue, lo tengo privado. Lo que más me duele es mi novia porque ella es lo que más amo en mi vida. La verdad es que ya no aguento estar todo este tiempo sin ella ya que con ella pase buenos momentos en mi vida y por eso la quiero un chingo. Extraño todo las cosas que juntos pasamos y por eso es que siento que mi vida aquí no vale nada. Quiero salir y estar con ella toda mi vida porque ella me ha demostrado cuanto me quiere.

Todos aquí sufrimos por algo y eso es por lo que sufro yo. Yo sufro porque extraño a mi baby. Cada día que me llegan cartas de ella, me pongo a llorar por todo lo que ella me dice. Yo quisiera poder estar con ella este 20 de Noviembre que es mi cumpleaños. Ella es todo para mí.

Espero en Dios pronto salir y no volver a cometer los mismos errores que cometí.

Aquí estoy con unos homies y mi primo por el mismo delito. Espero en Dios pronto salir y cumplir mis sueños que son terminar high school y tener un trabajo para poder ser alguien en la vida.

Esta es mi primera vez y última porque no creo volver aquí. Todo este tiempo que llevo aquí es lo peor de mi vida. Ya estoy sin mi girl que tanto amo. Todo el mundo se me pone de cabeza al pensar en lo que estaría haciendo con ella.

Bueno, mis saludos para todos mis homies. Piensen bien las cosas antes de hacerlas porque los aparta de sus vidas que tanto quieren y de las personas que amas. Por eso la vida afuera es mejor. Gocenla mientras puedan y aprovechen todo los instantes porque luego pueden caer en la piche juvenil.

From The Beat: Lo bueno es que tendrás otra oportunidad de salir de esta c-cel y poder realizar tus sueños. Si tanto quieres a esa muchacha, deberías de luchar y hacer lo correcto para conservarla. Se nota que has aprendido de esta lección y que harás mejor para mejorar tu vida y estar con las personas que más amas. Nadie te está deteniendo para que cumplas lo que quieras. O sea que tienes el camino libre, entonces deberías de contruir tu camino a la victoria.

The Life On The Outs

Well, it's all good, we know that out side life is better because in here you are deprived everything and you don't have the things you want. I've been in the USA for 9 months thank God. Unfortunately I came here and I miss the life on the outs because there I had it all.

I all I gained since I got here, are deprived from me. What hurts me the most is my girl, because she is what I love the most. The truth is that I can't handle anymore to be without her anymore because I spent so many good moments with her in my life and that's why I love her a lot. I miss all the things that we used to do together and that's why I feel like my life isn't worth it. I want to get out and be with her all my life because she has showed me how much she loves me

We all suffer for something and that's why I'm suffering. I suffer because I miss my babe. Every time I get letters, I cry for all the things she says to me. I wish I to be with her this November 20th for my birthday. She is all for me.

I hope in God to get out soon and never commit the same mistakes I made.

Here I am with some homies and my cousin for the same crime. I hope in God to get out soon and make my dreams come true that are to finish high school, and get a job that can make me be somebody in life.

This is my first and last time because I'm not coming back here. All the time I've been here has been the worst of my life. I am without my girl who I love the most. That's why life on the outs is better. Enjoy it while you can and enjoy everything that comes your way because you can get back into juvenile hall.

-Jenni-Joe, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The Good thing about your situation is that you will get another chance to get out of the halls and be able to realize your dreams. If you really want that girl, you should fight for her and do what's correct to keep her. It is noticeable that you have learned your lesson and at least, you will try to better your life and be with the person you love. Nobody is holding you back from making anything you desire a reality. In other words, you got a long way to go. So start building your way to victory.

Esta Experiencia

He tomado decisiones estupidas y la verdad es que me ha ido mas o menos mal, pero le doy gracias a Dios porque todavía estoy vivo. Le pido a Dios todos los días que me de una oportunidad de salir de aquí porque la verdad es que no me gustaría volver a este lugar. A mi corta edad, esta es una de las experiencias más feas que me ha pasado.

Voy a ser lo mejor de mi vida y voy a cambiar las decisiones malas que he hecho. Voy a trabajar, y voy a tratar de ser alguien en la vida. No quiero causar más preocupaciones a mis padres.

From The Beat: Esas palabras, "voy a tratar" no nos convence. Mejor di "lo voy a hacer". De que vuelvas a este lugar todo depende de las decisiones que llegues a tomar. Aprende de las experiencias que te están pasando.

This Experience

I've made so many stupid decisions and the truth is that things had gone not so good, but I still give my thanks to God for being alive. I ask God everyday to give me an opportunity to get out of here because the truth is that I wouldn't like to come back here. In my short age, this is one of the worse experiences I've gone through.

I'm going to do the best of my life and try not to commit wrong decisions I've done. I'm going to work, and try to be someone in life. I don't want to cause more worries to my parents.

-Alex, San Francisco

From The Beat: These words, "I'm going to try" doesn't sound convincing! You should say, "I'm going to do it." Whether you come back or stay out, it's a decision that only you can make. Learn from the experiences you are going through.

I Love You

Te amo tanto tanto tanto
me hace falta, tanta falta
mis noches son pesadillas
me voy a quitarme la vida
y a ponerme cerca de tu cama
para estar contigo Kimberly
y el viento me trae tu besos
y música a que oiga
los besos que me distes
amor ya no sufres más
esto se va a realizar.

From The Beat: Humm, que extraño poema! Que es lo que se va a realizar? Solo estamos de curioso!

Te Amo

I love you so much, so much, so much
I miss you, I miss you
my nights are nightmares
I'm going to take my life away for you
and stay near your bed
to be with you Kimberly
the wind brings me your kisses
and music so I can listen to
the kisses that you gave me
my love, don't suffer anymore
this will become a reality

-Anonymous, San Francisco

From The Beat: Humm, what a weird poem! What's going to become a reality? Just being curious!

Regresar Un Día Antes

Bueno, al tiempo que quisiera regresar es a un día ántes de salir de mi casa. Si no me hubiera salido, no estubiera aqui y estubiera celebrando mi cumpleaños que es hoy el 2o de Noviembre. Mírenme donde estoy, en la pinche juvenile pagando todos los errores que he cometido.

Si pudiera regresar el tiempo, lo haría para no tener tantos problemas, pasarmela con mi familia. Pues tenia 15 años sin estar sin ellos y hoy que los encontré no puedo verlos porque les pague mal y no puedo hacer nada.

Quiero decirle a todos los homies que se pongan truchas, que no hagan cosas que no van. Yo quiero salir y terminar high school y tener un buen trabajo.

Regresaría el tiempo a esa fecha en la que no tenía problemas con nadie y salir adelante con la ayuda de mi esfuerzo. Ese es mi plan, salir y hecharle ganas a la escuela.

No quiero ser malo, pues nunca lo he sido. Hechenle ganas a todos que lean esto y van a ver que si es verdad que se puede. Se los dice un buen amigo que ya paso por lago gacho. No caigan en las drogas. Es bueno vivir sin drogas. Bueno al rato y saludos a todos.

From The Beat: Ya regresar el tiempo no puedes hacerlo, pero si puedes hacer cosas que no pudiste hacer realidad una vez que salgas de aquí como obtener una buena educación y un buen trabajo. Lo bueno es que esta experiencia te ha ayudado a ver tus errores y te ha dirigido a la entrada de una nueva empezar para una nueva vida. Cuale son tus otros planes?

To Go Back A Day Before

Well, I would like to turn back time to a day before I left the house. I hadn't gone out, I wouldn't be here and I would be celebrating my birthday today, November 2nd. But, look at where I am, in this damn juvenile hall paying for the mistakes I've made.

If I can turn back time, I would do it to avoid many problem I have now, and spend time with my family. I spent fifteen years without them and now that I found them, I can't be with them because I failed them and I can't do anything about it.

I want to tell all my homies to be careful, not to do things that aren't right. I want to get out to finish high school and have a good job.

I wish I could turn back time to the time when I didn't have any problems with anyone and be able to succeed by my own. That's my plan, to get out and make an effort in my studies.

I don't want to be bad even though I've never been bad. Keep going on to those who read this and you will see that you can make it. This is said by a friend that already went through the hard ones. Don't end up in drugs. It's good to live without them. Well, see you later, and my greetings to all.

-Jenny Joe, Santa Clara

From The Beat: To turn back time might be something impossible to do, but you can do things you couldn't do once you get out of here- getting a good education and a good job. The good thing of all is that this experience has opened your eyes to see your mistakes and gave you the entrance of finding a new start to a better life. What are your others plans?

Estando Aquí

Hola homies, les saluda su cuate Daniel. Pues mi historia es así. Tengo poco tiempo que llegue aquí a la juvenile y me estoy dando cuenta de todo lo difícil que es estar adentro y no poder estar allá afuera.

Cuando llegue aquí, deje a mi girl y extraño estar con ella, pasando bien sin broncas. No regresar nunca más aquí porque no quiero sufrir m-s.

Les doy este consejo a todos los homie que estan leyendo mi historia: cuando salgan no cometan los mismos errores que hemos cometido.

Bueno, cada jueves estarán escuchando más de mi triste historia. ¿Qué piensas hacer ahora que te distes cuenta de lo duro que es estar aquí adentro? Esperamos y hayas aprendido de tu lección.

Being Here

Hi homies, this is your friend, Daniel. My story starts like this. I came here not too long ago, and I am realizing how hard it is to be here and not be able to be on the outs.

When I got here, I left my girl who I miss to hang without any problems. I don't want to come back here anymore because I don't want to suffer anymore.

I'm going to give this advice to all the homies who are reading my story: when you get out to never commit the same mistakes we have made.

OK guys, you'll be hearing more about my sad story soon.

-Liro, San Francisco

From The Beat: What are your plans now that you've realized how hard it is to be in here? We hope you had learned your lesson?

Mejor Hubiera Corrido

Ahora estoy en la cárcel porque estaba kickiandola con los homies. Pos mejor me hubiera quedado dormido en mi casa dormido. Ahora pienso que hubiera corrido de la policia y ahorita no tubiera en prisión.

La gente me decla que me parezco a un callejero porque todo el dia andaba en la calles kickiandola con los homies. No hacía caso a mi madre. Ella aveces lloraba y me decía que si quería terminar en la cárcel pero la neta es que mi hermano y yo somos así. Se que se aguita porque estamos en prisión.

From The Beat: Claro que la gente va a pensar mal de ti, que no has escuchado el dicho que dice, "dime con quien andas y te dire quien eres." No crees que tu madre ya ha sufrido mucho por ti y tu hermano. Es ese el tipo de aprecio que se merece por ustedes?

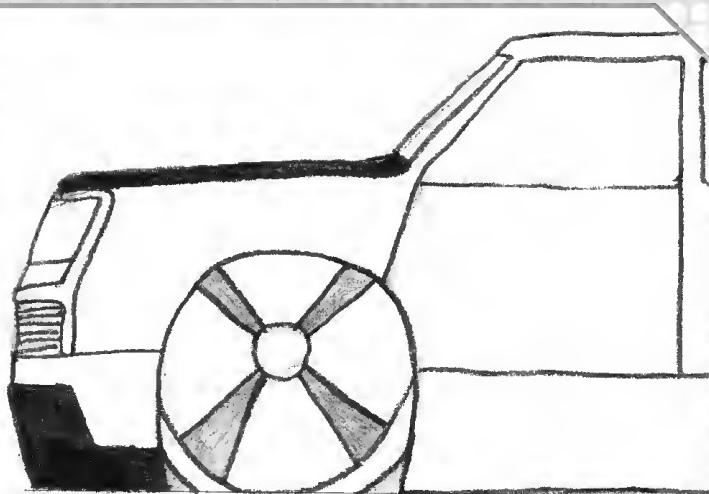
I Should Have Run

I am in jail because I was kicking it with my homies. I wish I had stayed sleeping at home. Now, I think I should have run from the streets and I wouldn't be in prison.

People tell me I look like a thug because I would be kicking with the homies on the streets. She would cry and used to tell me I wanted to end up in jail. The truth is that my brothers I am like this. I know she gets sad because we are in prison.

-Lil' Duende, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Of course people are going to think wrong about you. Haven't you heard the saying that goes, "tem me who hang with and I'll tell you who you." Don't you think your mother has suffered so much about you and your brother? Is this how you appreciate what she has done for you and all her suffering caused by you and your brother?



Mi Jaina

Pues ahora voy a escribir acerca de mi haina aunque ahorita este enojada conmigo. Se dio cuenta que estaba con otra cuando estaba afuera y me siento triste.

Yo le había prometido que nunca le iba hacer llorar otra vez. No pude retener mi palabra, pero ahora tengo que aceptar las consecuencias aunque aun la amo. Ella decidió dejarme pero ojalá y piense las cosas bien y se decida a regresar conmigo. Ella sabe que la amo.

From The Beat: Si ella te quiere, te dará esa oportunidad y si no tienes que aceptar la realidad. Tu fuiste la quien la rego. Ella se debe sentir bien dolida. Esta en ella que te perdone. Dinos cosa, si fuera ella la que te hubiese hecho infiel, la perdonaras?

My Girl

Well, I'm going to write about my girl even though she is mad at me right now. She found out I was cheating on her with another girl and I feel sad about it.

I had promised her that I was never going to make cry again. I couldn't keep my word, but now I have to accept the consequences even though I love her. She decided to leave me, but I hope she thinks about it and decide to give another chance. She knows I love her.

-Anonymous, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If she loves you, she might give you another chance, but if she doesn't you should accept the reality. You were the one who messed it up anyways. She might feel hurt. It's all up to her. Tell us something, if it was her who cheated on you, would you forgive her?

Hago Lo Que Quiero

Yo siempre hago lo que quiero aunque a nadie le guste. Ahora estoy en el sistema y tengo que seguir las reglas para poder estar en el nivel A. Siempre trato de hacer las cosas bien para que no me estén cagando el palo.

From The Beat: No solo te deberías de portarte bien aquí adentro sino afuera también afuera para evitar caer a estos lugares. No crees?

I Do What I Want

I always do what I want even if nobody likes it. Now I am in the system and I have to follow the rules to get to A level. I always try to do things right in here, so they won't mess with me.

-Crikri, No Unit

From The Beat: You should also do your best in behaving well on the outs not just here to avoid coming to this place. Don't you think so?

Mis Pensamientos Sobre Dos Temas

Bueno yo creo que esta bien que Obama haya ganado estas elecciones. Espero que haya un mejor gobierno que el de George W. Bush quizcer. Espero que nos den derechos a los inmigrantes, que hayan nuevos proyectos para que ayuden a los Latinos. Queremos que haya un verdadero cambio en EEUU. Ya estamos arto del racismo, queremos que toda la gente camine con la frente en alta sin pensar que alguien le va a querer hacer algun daño. Queremos que se terminen las pandillas, que hayan buenos proyectos para acabar con todo lo que nos hacen mal. Ojalá y Obama traiga el camino.

Creo que lo primero que uno ve al entrar a una pandilla es que todo va a ser divertido, que vas a beber, fumar, ir a fiestas, y creo que el mundo es tuyo. Pero uno se da cuenta que le esta destruyendo la vida a los demás y la vida de uno mismo. Todo termina cuando llega un policia, te arresta y termina todo. Ahí es cuando dispiertas de la realidad de todo lo malo que andas haciendo.

Recuerdo cuando íbamos con mis homies a buscar personas que aveces solo llevaban poco de dinero para comer, y se los quitabamos. Eso es algo que no volviera a hacerlo. Bueno amigos, alejensen de las pandillas. Un saludo a mis amigos.

From The Beat: Ojalá y este presidente lleve a hacer muchas cosas y más. Personas con tus pensamientos as lo que necesitamos para ayudar a nuestra gente. Tu deberías de prepararte y llegar a ser un cambio aquí. Nada es imposible. Puedes y llegues a tomar un cargo bien importante en el país, como Arnold Schwarzenegger. Gracias por tus consejos sobre las pandillas, esperamos y muchos aprendan de tu consejo y mensaje. Lo bueno de todo es que estas arrepentidos de tus actos y que ya ha cambiado tu forma de pensar. Gracias y sigue escribiéndonos.

My Thoughts About Two Topics

Well, I think it's fine that Obama won the elections. I hope we make a better government than George W. Bush tried to make. I hope they give immigrants some rights, and to create new projects to help the Latinos. We want a big change in the US. We are tired of racism we want all people walk with their heads up without fearing getting harm. We want the gangs to end, to have new projects to eliminate everything that hurt us. I hope Obama creates the road.

I think the first thing you think before getting into a gang is that everything will be fun, that you will drink, smoke, and I think the world is yours. Everything ends come the cops come, get arrested and everything ends. That's when you wake up to reality from all the bad you are doing.

I remember when I used to kick it with my homies and take away the money of those who barely had something to eat. That's something I wouldn't do over again. Well my friends, stay away from gangs and my greetings to you all.

-Rosny, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope this president make this happen and more. People who think like you are what we need to help our people. You should prepare yourself with a good education to become a very important person in this country like Arnold Schwarzenegger, but try to be better than him. Thank you for your advice about gangs and we hope many of you get your message. The good things of all are that you regretful of your actions and have changed your ways of thinking. Thank you and keep writing us.

Have You Learned?

You sit here dreaming
 While the others are really asleep
 You're soul searching
 Attempting to figure out if you have what it takes to keep
 Things from going wrong again
 So many mistakes in the past
 Have you really learned it?
 You question, "Have I really learned it?"
 Because freedom is just around the corner
 From the corner where you used to stand hustlin'
 Right down the street from where your man got shot and killed
 Right up the block from where you stay
 I mean sleep
 Because you don't live there
 Just a borrowed cot
 Right across the street from where the woman you get high
 with lives
 Who is trying to quit crack by becoming an alcoholic
 While the streets and television raise her children
 Just a phone call away from that holding cell
 Requesting that your "boys" raise money for your bail
 Only a paddy wagon trip away
 From state road where you sit lonely, hungry, and cold
 Herded from holding cell to holding cell
 Sleeping on floors and hard wood benches
 Ain't bathed in three days
 Right beneath B2-1 where they ship you to spend 26 days in quarantine
 Just a week away from CJC (criminal justice center)
 Where you get found guilty
 And sentenced to five years upstate
 For V.U.F.A.
 What the *#%! is that?
 Violation of the uniform firearm act
 Now you're only a van ride away from grater fort
 Yellow jump suits
 Staring out of the window at that huge concrete wall
 360 degrees everywhere you turn
 "Where do you want your body sent?"
 State # GR8416
 One envelope away
 From her eyes burning and face tear streaked
 Your female just received your mail
 (Just) a day before that blue goose transport
 Idiotic black box
 Has your hands trapped uncomfortably for that two hour
 Ride to Camp Hill
 Just two days away from being classified
 Going from blues to browns
 A day away from working in the kitchen
 For 19 cents and hour
 And a 4:30am wake-up call
 Just ten minutes away from shuffling to work
 And seeing me write my life's story out on scraps of paper
 As you sit at the table to eat your morning meal
 With lifer's eye's looking at you
 With an unspoken question
 Piercing your soul
 Freedom is just around the corner
 "Have you learned?"

Our next writer is sending us these brilliant pieces from Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. William is a first time writer for The Beat, and we're glad that he stumbled on our publication. He delivers some very powerful pieces as he gets deep, deep like the bottom of the Atlantic. His poems are detailed with descriptive similes and metaphors. Read between the lines. We are proud to introduce you to Mr. William Johnson.

Hello The Beat,

My name is William Johnson and I am incarcerated at SCI-CAMP HILL in PA. This is my first entry and it shall not be my last. I learned of your publication through word of mouth, and I decided to check you guys out. Upon receiving your publication I was pleasantly surprised by the entries of all the incarcerated youths.

To them I speak: Your work is good, minds are strong, and your future is bright. Continue to shine in those dark places and allow GOD to guide you; not self because self is unwise and foolish. Look at where it has gotten us. So with every new day, rectify the wrongs of yesterday, dismantle the thinking that has landed us here, and let us build ourselves mentally and spiritually.

I love you all with the kind of love a prisoner has for freedom. Keep Pushin' You'll make it!

Post script: I hope you all enjoy my poetic favor. At times you will be able to see through my work how I may have been feeling that day or week. What I hope is that you all will be able to relate to some of my works and grow off of them. PEACE.

I Thought I Needed....

I saw
 That I was spending a lot of my time
 With the concerns of this world
 Investing in frivolous practices
 Money, drugs, sports, entertainment, and recreation
 All in an useless attempt to obtain a "wholeness"
 To feel happy and complete
 But it was all for nada (nothing, naught)
 I spent 29 years wasting time
 For nothing in this world can satisfy me
 You see I was fooled
 Thinking it was all about me
 How can I be made happy?
 Content
 And loved?
 When it was never about me
 It is about GOD
 Writing poems about lost love
 Chasing a high
 Or just trying to satisfy myself
 I was busy
 Preoccupied with gain
 Yet steadily losing
 Blind
 Unable to see the light
 Deaf
 Unable to hear the truth
 Until I stumbled and fell
 Five years incarceration
 Ran concurrent with the love of my life leaving me
 Because she
 Just like I
 Thinks it's all about ME.

Slave To Freedom

Freedom calls
 Beckoning from behind closed doors
 Windows that never open give off false perceptions
 I see right through you
 Yet I still can't see freedom
 What I see are lies
 And barely visible chains that have minds bound
 In bondage to false precepts
 Have faith in a lie is like copulating with an AID's victim
 Believing that you are safe
 Yet not knowing that there are microscopic tears in your protection
 Need I say more?
 Freedom is a lie
 And we are all slaves to it.

Wrecked!

Cigarette in hand
 Pen in the other
 Staring at four yellow walls
 Brain pacin'
 Conscience idling over the thought
 "I should have listened"
 To whom?
 All the people (aboard my ship)
 Trying hard to steer me clear
 Of the obstacles of street life
 But I didn't listen and wrecked the ship
 Now I'm stranded in a prison cell

All alone
 On an island full of time
 To ponder my wrongs
 With 1825 days to decide, plan, implement
 This time MUST be my last
 I'm the captain of this ship
 MY LIFE
 And although the weather (right now) is gloomy
 The sun will shine again
 Providing me with another chance to set sail
 On this journey through life
 This time I will listen
 I will not fail!
 Will you?

The Light

Sentenced to face reality
 Life
 Without the fleeting devices of the gratification of me
 But that is when I heard
 Heard what I've been deaf to for all these years
 I still small voice
 Saying, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-30)
 And I needed that voice and came
 For I was so tired
 In need of that rest
 And as I drew closer
 I began to see
 A light
 That shined brighter
 And brighter the closer I came
 My blind eyes were opened
 I was no longer a prisoner
 In a bondage to self
 For the love of God had set me free
 He came into my heart
 And filled my void
 With a love that completed me
 Brought hope
 Freedom and trust
 Now, I no longer try things by my own means
 Now that I can see and hear
 I seek the light in all I do
 I let God guide me
 For everything that I was trying
 To gain on my own
 For the last 29 years
 Love, happiness, and financial stability
 Are all mine through God
 Matthew 6:33.

ASCENCIO ROLANDO

To The Beat Within and To Those Gifted and Talented Writers:

My gratitude to The Beat Within and to those who have passed through my life whether in a positive or negative note. My utmost love and respects to each and every one of you, especially to those that find themselves through such difficulties. Hopefully my presence is felt from all over that fight those struggles. I encourage you to keep it strong. I myself am battling. For those who may no know me, my name is Ascencio Rolando. I'm currently housed here in Salinas Valley State Prison. I just received my issue of The Beat Within a fabulous and remarkable book that inspires us readers to excel in our performances that our mind and heart allows us to write with pen and paper.

It's a blessing to hear from you all. It truly does allow us to enjoy great satisfaction that accompanies our success. The Beat Within a provocative book that can affect everything to our inner heart and souls. It gives us the realistic details of life from young to old. I'm still at a young stage what you call living and learning. Hopefully my company can provide the younger homies like me the knowledge to build our strength, the strength to sustain ones self-goals and obtain victory on the battlefields of gangs and drugs. Some of us might be fighting deeper struggles, emotions but it's within ourselves to change!

Through my whole young career I lived in nothing but

Our next writer is sending us some advice from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA. Ascencio has established himself as a very thoughtful writer often writing to give advice. Ascencio doesn't sugar coat anything as he tells you the honest truth about his prison experience. All of you that find yourselves going to camps, group homes, or just sitting in the hall, you have plenty of time to change, but as our friend Ascencio says, poor decision making, will turn those months into years. And before you know it, you find yourself deeper into the system, and it's hard to get out folks. So kick back, take your time to flip through this page, and listen to some real true advice from someone that is trapped in a system that he does not want any of y'all to be a part of.

blurriness. I have been in and out fighting. I realize that I was only deceiving myself. Now I live challenging all the open doors I have opened. It took this far in time to finally realize.

"Prison" I hope you young folks in the halls, placements or any other detention stop now stop while you're a head. I can tell you from my prospective that what you do will soon catch up. Every thing you do follows you, everything is in record. It never goes away. Those little months will soon turn to years. When you see the judge, jury's, they look at your history and decide your sentence so remember it's not a slap in the hand.

I'm not sugar coating this I'm being REAL. It's different in this world. Everything is politics. I just ask of you to think before you act. Be smart. It's hard getting out the system but we can do it. Just take my advice from a young friend, God Bless.

Con amor y respeto, (with love and respect)

Profiles in Addiction: Wildflower

I met Coco about three years ago. At the time I was deep in the stag net waters of a drug addiction. I supported my addiction of crack cocaine by selling the same drug to other addicts. I saw her walking down one of Beaumont's "ho strolls". She was pretty and voluptuous, but looked no older than fifteen. I couldn't tell if she was white, Hispanic, or light skinned black girl. She stared at me as we crossed paths with a hopeful look.

I assumed this young girl was prostituting and probably for crack or enough money to buy some. I didn't acknowledge her; I kept going. Later I asked another prostitute about her and learned her name and found out my first impressions of her were correct.

One night, a week later, I saw her again while on my way to meet a wholesale drug connection in one of our clandestine spots. It was a cold, rainy, winter night. She was standing alone on a corner in a short sleeve shirt, jeans, and was barefoot. As I got closer, I noticed she had two black eyes. My heart went out to her. I felt sorry for her, so I stopped to talk with her. I asked her what happened to her eyes.

She told me how her child's father had beaten her. She asked me if I had any dope and I told her I was on my way to purchase some. I knew she wanted to get high but didn't have the money hence the reason she stood on the corner, impatiently waiting for a trick, any trick. The drop spot was a half-mile away, but I knew had I left her there, she'd probably not be there when I got back, so I asked her to accompany me.

I took off my warm jacket and gave it to her. That's when I felt how cold it really was. I'd worn a short sleeve under the jacket. It was difficult for her to keep my pace, there were a lot of rocks and broken glass on the ground. Her bare feet were catching hell! I let her climb on my back and I carried her the rest of the way.

On the way back, Coco repeatedly requested I give her a "hit". I told her to wait until we got to my room, so I could cut it up. Actually I could have honored her request. My motive, however, was to get back to my room where she could be warm. I attempted small talk with her, but her responses were laconic. Her mind was getting high. Talking with her was like talking with a child. She did tell me she was menstruating, so I stopped at the store and bought us both some cigarettes and her a box of feminine napkins. The fact is she was so desperate for crack. She was willing to turn a trick, even vaginal sex, although she was on her period.

When we got to my room, she pulled out her crack pipe and eagerly sat, anticipating some dope, probably assuming I was going to ask her for sex in exchange for drugs (I'm sure she thought this was why I brought her to my room). I told her I had a deal for her. If she first took a shower and ate, I'd let her hang out with me and smoke as much crack as she wanted.

"Is that all I have to do?" she asked like a child.

"That's it," I told her.

"Are you sure? Nothing else?" She added.

"That's it," I repeated.

"Well...Ok."

And off to the shower she went. In the meantime, I left my room and went to the room of a woman I knew who was about her size and got her a change of clothes and a pair of tennis shoes. Then I walked to Checkers and got us both some burgers and fries.

After she'd showered, changed, and eaten, she seemed brighter and exuded and innocent, naïve beauty, not conscious of itself, especially with the prospect of getting high. Her face, though still pretty, was marked by her blackened eyes. She looked like an abused child sitting in a chair opposite me. I felt guilty sharing crack with her, but knew if she wasn't getting it free from me now, she'd be out on the streets prostituting herself for the same thing. I started asking her personal questions about herself, but she became defensive and wanted to know why I was asking.

Our next writer just came through with a brilliant piece of writing. Powerful enough to maybe even have you shed some tears from your eyes. This story gives us a glimpse into the life of an older man, trying to understand why a young teenage girl has turned to the streets to sell her body just to get high. Writing from Port Arthur, Texas, Paul scripts out a detailed movie for us to watch. Based on a true story, he gives us a view of what's going on in her mind and his as well. He brings up a good point that we as people are unconcerned about others just because they a different race, sex, nationality, or social status. There are people crying out for help in the world and others just sit there and ignore them. We hope that y'all can learn something from this powerfully sad story revolving around addiction and neglect.

So I lightened the mood by telling her a little about myself on how I'd gotten involved in drugs and how I was fighting tooth and nail to quit the addiction. I was ingenuous as I could be, even through the most painful and embarrassing parts. This seemed to help her to be willing to open up to me. Her story is a touching, sad portrait of a little girl who never grew up.

Coco was nineteen years old at the time of our first meeting in 2005. She is originally from Acres Homes, a drug infested part of the north side of Houston. She is part Hispanic and part White. She was given the nickname Coco because of the creamy color of her skin. She was raised in a broken, dysfunctional home. She first experimented with crack cocaine at the age of twelve, hanging out with delinquent friends after school. She immediately became addicted.

At first the drugs were given to her free as a hanger on with various groups of delinquent children. Soon, however, Coco found herself craving the drug but no one was willing to give it to her, and the money she was given for reduced lunch at school wasn't enough. She had recently turned thirteen and was still a virgin. A drug dealer made an indecent proposal to her. If she would allow him to have sex with her, he'd give her a crack rock.

"I told him, I'll do it, if he let me hit the dope first," she reminisced.

And that is how she lost her virginity. At that moment Coco discovered as long as she was willing to have sex, she could smoke as much crack as she wanted. What's more, she, at the age of thirteen, had already blossomed physically into an attractive woman. And in the predominately Black neighborhood she lived, she was novelty. Because she was fresh to the drug scene, every drug dealer took his turn with her. She didn't think of herself as a prostitute. She, in her reasoning was just partying and getting high. After all, she wasn't, at the time, standing on corners like other prostitutes.

As time wore on, so did Coco's novelty on the scene. She was no longer the dope dealer's delight. She had to find another way to get high. It didn't take long for her to be approached by men as she walked down the street who offered her money in exchange for sexual favor. To her it wasn't different than "partying" with drug dealers. Only now she'd have the money in her hands to purchase the drugs herself from the dealer. But this required her making herself more visible on the streets.

She began walking the streets and hanging on corners. She also discovered wearing clothing that highlighted her assets, increased her chances and the amount of men who picked her up. She stopped going to school altogether and started hanging full time in areas of prostitution and spent nights in crack houses. Her mother eventually found out what the daughter was doing and refused her admittance into the home. Coco was now orphaned, alone and on her own at the age of thirteen in the streets of Houston, homeless.

Coco knew nothing about being on her own. She only knew how to find means to get high. Every now and then one of the tricks that picked her up would house her for a day or two, sometimes a week, until the money and drngs ran out or he got tired of her. Most of the time she slept wherever she could, even in alleys and abandoned cars and houses.

One would suppose Coco's desperations coupled with her constant contact with the degradation of street life would harden her into a criminally mischievous mind. Yet Coco emotionally remained an innocent, naïve twelve-year-old girl. She doesn't boost, pickpocket, steal, or run average street

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TBWD THE F OF B F A T • W I T H O U T

THE EASTWIND JRC VOLUME 14.03 PAGE 71

-PAUL JAY REED cont.

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game. She doesn't use profanity, choosing rather to use words like "darn", "shoot", "shucks", and "golly" as explices. Her mannerisms are simple and straightforward.

In the streets, she is not the user. She is the used. Amazingly no man has yet succeeded at pimping her. When men attempt to control her, Coco disappears from the area, reemerging somewhere else where no one knows her, becoming novelty again. Therefore she is a teenage vagabond, carpet bagging her way through life. Coco's perspective on life has been molded by neglect, abuse, deception, and indecency. She lives in a world where men don't love her but simply lust for her young body. The women she meets encourage her to go out in the streets and make something happen with her body. Law enforcement officials hound and harass her, sometimes forcing her to choose between having sex or going to jail. She lacks formal education and viable job skills, so everything she wants or needs, from drugs to food, must be purchased through sexual acts.

No one has given her anything without the strings of prostitution attached to it. She owns nothing but her body, which she rents out to be performed for money and/or drugs. She has experienced the selfish, perverse desires of men but never felt loved, wanted, honored, or valued.

Coco's transitional lifestyle eventually led her to Beaumont, a small city, and 90 miles east of Houston.

She wound up getting pregnant from one of her tricks who became possessive and began abusing her physically. He wanted her to stop drugging and prostituting and settle down with him. When she didn't he became violent.

During our conversation I asked her did she enjoy what she does for drugs. I asked because many of us men assume women who prostitute themselves are sex-craved nymphs.

"Not really. I just do it because it's the only way," she reflected.

"Do you enjoy sex?" I asked. "I mean have you ever had an orgasm?"

She blushed and couldn't repress a giggle, "No. I just do it to get them men off, so I can get on and get high. Men enjoy what they do to me, I guess. But I really don't."

I then asked her if she's been asked to do things sexually she didn't want to do, and how did she respond to it. She became more serious.

"Some men have tried to pay me to be with another girl, but I ain't like that. Or they ask me to do things to them that ain't right, so I just leave and wait for another one. I've been beaten and raped. I've had to jump out of cars naked and run for my life. One time a cop handcuffed me. I thought he was taking me to jail. But he pulled down in an alley and made me perform."

"Do you love yourself," I asked

"I don't know. I guess not because if I did, I wouldn't be doing what I do."

She doesn't know what she wants out of life due to low expectations. Her plans for the future are filled with the same doubt and uncertainty. She doesn't know how to be a mother to her baby, probably because the baby was produced as the unexpected and unwanted result in an effort to earn enough money to get high. She only practices safe sex at the request of a few of her tricks, placing her at a higher risk to contract H.I.V. She has already had bouts with other curable venereal disease, including lice (crabs).

Society expects little of her or any, another teenage drug addict prostitute, known on the streets as "crack hoes". They are regarded as crack whores because the amount they charge for sex is regulated by the crack industry. Yet prominent men of the community businessman, clergymen, lawyers, doctors, judges and police officers often seek their services. Others choose to ignore them, hoping they'll fall out of sight, out of mind. The average "good" Christian tries to keep a "safe" distance from these social lepers. Other addicts tend to tag along with them as long as they are active and can produce the means to get high. And then there are those conservative political Calvinist who'd like to redeem society by annihilating them through legislation. Few actually care enough to get involved in their lives, to love them and help them discover

greater joys than drugs without trying to control them.

I saw Coco a few times after this, each time I would get her something to eat and offer her time out from the street. One day I intervened in an incident where a pimp was trying to force her to work for him and take her money. He was roughing her up. I challenged him to take my money. Most pimps are ready to assault vulnerable woman but hesitant to challenge a man. I took her to my room where she remained for a few hours. I fed her and we sat and watched television together. Before she left she threw her arms around me, hugging me affectionately.

"I love you, Paul!" she exclaimed.

"I mean I really do. I ain't just saying that either. No one has ever treated me the way you do. No man has ever done anything for me without wanting me to have sex with them. You are decent and I know one day your going to quit. You deserve better. I wish more people were like you. I wish I was like you."

It was an encouraging, emotional moment. I had to fight back tears as I embraced this beautiful, sincere young woman, who'd just added a cubic to my stature and affirmed my self-esteem.

I haven't seen Coco in over two years. She's probably moved on to a different town with a fresh start on the streets. I miss her and often think about her, hoping she has discovered her own inner beauty and affirmed it as she did for me. She is truly a wonderful human being, deserving a hell of a lot more out of life than what she's getting.

To the world Coco is a grown woman. But I saw only a child trapped in a woman's body, a child waiting to be loved, nurtured and guided into a better way of life. Coco represents the greatest challenge to social work.

The challenge is not so much to stop her from doing drugs or to tell her how to live or force changes on her. She is a child waiting to discover it. She will probably pursue it with the same relentless determination and self-sacrifice she has for drugs. We must help her discover it for herself. We must affirm the child and help her mature in healthy ways. This involves getting out there in the trenches with her. If your car had stalled in the middle of the road, which would be of greater help to you? Someone standing there, reading the owner's manual to you, while you struggle to push it? Or someone willing to help you push it to a safe spot?

That's just what happened to me recently. I was working with a friend and his nephew on the outskirts of Port Arthur, in a predominately White town. On the way back, his truck ran out of gas. The nearest gas station was about a mile away. We got out and started pushing the truck (he didn't have a gas can). We passed through a residential area. People were outside, watching us, ignoring us. People in their vehicles pass us by. No one dared asked could they be of service. Three Black men were out of place here.

When we get a block away from the station, one white lady, who'd passed by us four blacks earlier, came back. She said she had a gas can and would help us out. Yet we were almost there now, we no longer needed anyone's help. We thanked her and moved on. Unfortunately, this is how society treats other people's struggles. We are unconcerned about others because they are different, a different race, sex, nationality, financial, or social status. Or we are indifferent to the situations they are in. It's not until they've almost reached their goals or it's too late for them, that we extend a helping hand.

The Coco's of this world are crying out for help. Every hit of crack is a plea for relief from her personal hells. Each night I pray for this young woman that society calls a thorn. But she's not a thorn. She is a wild flower. In the 1970's a group called New Birth recorded a popular song entitled "Wildflower". The lyrics befit Coco.

"Let her cry, she's a lady

Let her dream, for she is a child

Let the rainfall down upon her.

She's a sweet and gently flower growing wild."

TBWO THE F O B E A T • W I T H O U T • JERRY GATES.

Reflection Of The Moment

The painful reality of being a black man in America is knowing that you have grown accustomed to being treated like a stereotype. When you walk into a store, you're uncomfortable without the store clerk's trailing eyes. When you interview for a job, you expect offerings a handshake and nothing more. Your questions, the experience of any cab driver willing to pick you up at night. The clutching of purses in your presence no longer stirs your emotions. However, the wave of violence sweeping the country brings to surface feelings of being a black man that you cannot suppress.

To be a black man in America is to be invited on a hunting expedition, only to find out that you are the game. Every night your face is shown all over the country, while a reporter warns everyone that you are "dangerous." Politicians, feminists, racists, and even your own people argue about you. Society has chased you up a tree like a pack of hounds and holds you responsible for the stereotype of the uneducated. Crack-dealing misogynist, it's as if your clean family life job and college credits don't matter. When your daughters, sisters, and lovers write about you, you are either a womanizer or a rapist; you are unemployed or unemployable. Even powerful images of modern black "leaders" like Nelson Mandela, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Gen. Colin Powell, Barack Obama, Rev. Al Sharpton, and Jovis Smiley are no match for a "Crip" or "Blood" or "G."

The American Dream—The illusion of material success—is the best bait that lures you away from the truths that would make you strong: community, family, brotherhood. And the pursuit of this dream drives you further away from

your own identity, once you have been tempted by your all. The opulence and decadence, you are easy prey. The system will toy with, then destroy a black man. You cannot escape the hunt even in the densest part of the concrete jungle so many of us call home. A place where few Caucasians would dare draw breath, instead of having a refuge to survive.

You will be considered less than a black man if you conjugate your verbs, work hard in school, or avoid calling our woman "freaks-skeezers," bitches; terms used mostly in casual conversation amongst our brothers! If you avoid negative behavior, and language, your brothers may call you "white acting" (the ultimate insult to a self respecting brother). You anticipate subtle insults from whites, but when it comes from your own, you truly feel hounded. Sadly, we are hurting ourselves, killing one another in the streets, chemically distorting our hair. Thousands of confused individuals will go through life believing that being black has more to do with music, fashion, and slang, than heritage, morals and philosophy. It makes one wonder. Is this suicide or genocide? Perhaps Marvin Gaye read our minds when he sang, "Make you wanna holla, throw up both your hands."

ALBERTO SANCHEZ

La Navidad De Un Preso

Que triste es esta Navidad cuando te tienen cautivo, lejos de tus familiares y de tus amigos. Encerrado como una fiera en esta misma celda, recordadno a tus seres queridos y a mis queridos viejos. Cuando te entra la nostalgia, sabes a la yarda de concreto y estas esperando ver cuando vienen a visitarte, mientra sintiendote enfadado y muy desesperado. Estas parado ahí entre la manada de presos, y no te canzas de esperar.

Este mundo que vivo es muy claro, pero todo se ve muy claro. Cuando ves que nadie viene y te pones a pensar, "soy un hijo de un gallo bien fino. ¿Ser este maldito destino?" No lo puedes evitar y le dices a tus comparsas "¡que triste Navidad!"

Virgencita de Guadalupe, te pido de todo corazon, que me hagas el milagro de reunirme con todos mis seres queridos y mis padres viejos.

Te prometo que voy a cambiar virgencita! Te pones a meditar y ver los años pasar y toda la vida malarruinada y desperdiciada. Adentro de este penal, hay presos que entran y salen. Para ellos nada cambia y todo sigue igual.

Tu familia te recuerda y lloran sin descansar como no tienen la manera de venirte a visitar.

Se pasan día y noche rezando que quieren tu libertad.

Mi virgencita de Guadalupe, te pido que nunca me abandones. Aunque aveces quiera morir porque me canso de sufrir. Nada mas en ti confío y en ti encomiendo mi vida.

Te prometo que cuando salga libre, voy a verte arrodillado por casarme de esta pesadilla. ¡Que triste Navidad!

The Christmas Of A Prisoner

What a sad Christmas when they have you away, away from your family and your friends. Locked up like a while animal in this same cell, thinking of your loved ones and my old loved ones. When sadness hits you, you go out to the concrete yard to wait when they

Queremos darles las gracias y darle la bienvenida a nuestra publicación a Alberto Sanchez quien nos escribe desde CSATF/State Prison At Corcoran. El comienzo su introducción con nosotros con una redacción titulada, "La Navidad De Un Preso." Esperamos escuchar más de él y también le deseamos que en esta Navidad tenga más paz y más felicidad que las anteriores.

We want to thank and welcome Alberto Sanchez to our publications. He is writing us from CSATF/State Prison At Corcoran. He started his introduction with us with a poem titled, "Christmas Of A Prisoner." We hope to hear more from him and also wish him a better Christmas full of peace and happiness.

are coming to visit you, while feeling mad and desperate. You're standing there between a bunch and prisoners, and you never give up on waiting.

This world I live in is clear, but everything seem to be clear. When you see that nobody comes, you start to believe, "I am a son of a distinguished cock." Or is this my damn destiny? You can't hold it and you tell your friends "what a sad Christmas!"

Virgen Of Guadalupe, I'm asking you with all my heart to do me the miracle of reunite myself with all my loved ones and my parents.

I promise that I will change, my dear virgen! You start meditating and see the years goes by and experience a missed used and wasted life.

Inside there are prisoners who come in and get out. For those, nothing changed because everything stays the same. Your family think of you and cry without stopping for not being able to come visit you.

They spend all day and night praying for your freedom.

My Virgen of Guadalupe, I ask you to never abandon me. Sometimes I rather die because I get tired of suffering. I only trust anyone but You and I commend my life in you.

I promise that when I get out, I'm going to get on my knees and thank you for getting me off this nightmare. "What a sad Christmas."

If Only

If only... If only... That's pretty much all I'm left with, the could've, would've, should've... That's what a lot of us are left with. But that ain't me. I don't like to dwell on the past. What's done is done, and I'm just praying for a better day, but somehow, the thought of "If only" creeps into my mind and start eating away.

Sometimes it makes me laugh, and sometimes it makes me cry. 24-hour lockdown ain't fun. I think about everything and everyone, and read until my eyes get tired, and still I hardly ever sleep. I'm in this room so long that I hold conversations with people I haven't seen in a while and talk to them for long periods of time, different people. Sometimes I don't even know the person, but they talk to me and I talk back.

A human being needs to have some communication. Sometimes long conversations help. And the good thing, I don't have to hold anything from these people. You think I'm crazy? Wait 'til you're in a position like mine, and I bet you'll be doing the same thing.

You know, I sit back in my cell and wonder where I would be or what I would be if I wasn't a gang member. I remember the first time my uncle took me across the street to smoke my first blunt. We went back home and I was super gone. He told me to go look at myself in the mirror and see how blazed I looked. I did, and I never quit smoking again.

I remember when they got jumped into the 'hood, and how they would act when they came across a rival. To my young mind, that was sick, and I wanted to be down and bad like them. I often used to tell myself that I wanted to have the fighting skills of both of them put together so I could be better. I laugh when I think of my young days, and I always wonder when, exactly, did I cross the line of no return.

What good did it do me? What good has it ever done for anyone? Before I was 17, I was shot, stabbed, jumped with bats and bottles, run over or ran under ('cause I rolled over the car). But as long as I walked away with my life, I thought it was fun and games, and only thought about revenge, and

The title of the next piece by Abraham Martinez tells it all: "If Only..." In this sad piece, our old friend from SF/YGC (who wrote under the name of Goofy) says what we find ourselves warning our Beat writers in every issue, that without looking honestly at where your actions will take you, you could end up spending a lifetime wondering, "If only..." The scars that Goofy recounts don't include the scars on his soul, which are much more long-lasting, but much harder to count. We can only hope that his words will penetrate young minds who think it can't happen to them — just as he thought before he found himself in Alameda County's Santa Rita Jail facing a possible death sentence.

how good it would be to get back at them.

I didn't wake up from this dream until about three months ago. I actually counted my scars on my body from head to toe. I counted eleven — three in the head by bats and a knife, four in the chest by a .40 caliber, two in my arms, also by a gun, and two long scars by a K-9 bite. I realized how fortunate I am to still be breathing, and to not be disabled.

About three months ago, one of my close homies got shot in the shoulder sideways. It hit his spine and went up to his head, and now he's paralyzed from the neck down. Another homie got shot in the face and killed with is four-month-old kid in the back seat.

These incidents made me think about my situation, and helped me realize how lucky I've been. Even though I'm fighting a heavy case, and my freedom isn't guaranteed, I still will try to be a better man, and walk away with the memories and scars.

That's it. I trip and I think I could've been a real good mechanic if I hadn't got so deeply involved in gangs; or maybe one of those demolition people going around blowing up buildings and caves and stuff, since I like breaking things and the sound of dynamite going off.

I don't know people. It's just a bunch of "If onlys" in my head. I would be in this "could be" world. For now, I just keep praying and leave it to the Man up above to seal my fate. He knows me best and can be fair. Well, peoples, it's about that time for me to try to catch some zees (sleep) or read my book. 'Til pen meets paper again, keep ya' head up.

DORTEL WILLIAMS-

Prisoners For State Workers

It was almost like a trade off. In the state's most dire straits Governor Schwarzenegger proposed to release 22,000 nonviolent prisoners last February—who were already within 90 days of going home. Conservatives balked vociferously, standing on a tenuous platform of ideology (I guess they forgot Ronald Reagan released thousands of prisoners during a similar financial crisis in 1967). The move would have saved taxpayers a bundle and relieved dome of the strain from state coffers.

Rather than be the maverick many voters thought he'd be when they elected him in 2003, he folded under pressure and let a golden opportunity vaporize. Five months later those 22,000 prisoners, and thousands of others after them are now out anyway.

Yet as a tragic consequence of the many failures to cut unnecessary fat in areas of ideology and nonessentials, brutal cuts are not being made deep within vital flesh.

In May \$4 billion was cut in education in a desperate attempt to shore up the budget, \$15.2 billion in the red, and a deluge of pink slips were sent out like reapers to dismiss teachers who were already in short supply.

Meanwhile, Federal Receiver, Clark Kelso, appointed to correct and rehabilitate the catastrophic medical wing of the prison system, after it was found by the federal courts to

Dortell Williams writes us from a Correctional Facility in Lancaster Ca. We haven't heard from Dortell in a long while, and not because he's been missing in action, but because we are so backed up with BWOs that we really have to apologize to everybody. (We have over 650 submissions for BWOs, and only one person edits them and keeps track of them.) So if you guys haven't seen your work and you sent us some, just be patient. We have the Special BWO issue coming out soon, which will give us an opportunity just to catch up a little. In the meantime, Dortell comes through with another outstanding piece of writing with some vital information to share with everyone!

be wholly inadequate and operating unconstitutionally. It's demanding an immediate \$7 billion from the general fund to restore the system back to humane levels of care.

With corrections siphoning billions off the top, and health care services already cut to the bone for children and the elderly, the last alternative was an executive order to layoff 10,000 state workers August 1.

Sacrifice must come during these turbulent times said Schwarzenegger, as he dropped the hatchet. It's just too bad the sacrifices had to be made at the top, instead of the bottom where they would have been a practically painless procedure.

The saddest part is that it could all be for naught. Come November when the overcrowded "corrections" system goes to trial to defend other alleged unconstitutional patterns, the court could order thousands more prisoners released anyway.

TBW

THE BEAT WITHIN • WITHOUT

FREE MINDS BOOK CLUB AND WRITING WORKSHOP

12/23/08 To The Beat

The trip to North Dakota was amazing. The plane rides were another story. Totally grueling with all the weather delays. It took us 28 hours just to get there! But it was sooo worth it.

The families and the kids were so happy to see each other and actually hug each other after 2 years apart. It was so emotional. Everyone was crying.

We had the families and the kids write poems to each other and joint poems on what the visit meant and then shared them. So touching. The guards and staff were really moved I could tell as well. The power of writing!

Free Minds has already gotten our gift this year... a partnership with Beat Within!!!

Peace out

12/23 To Free Minds

As for your trip to North Dakota, wow! We'd love to include something in The Beat Within regarding your successful journey. Is there a story to share with the readers? A poem to share that was written during the visits? Thoughts?

12/24/08 To The Beat

You have such great ideas! I've attached poems that were written during the visit to North Dakota. Some of them were written jointly by moms and sons and one brother/brother team. They just spontaneously decided they wanted to write about what the trip meant to them, then they all shared with everyone. There weren't too many dry eyes in the room including the guards. It was so emotional. There are no contact visits allowed at the jail, so for some it was the first time in 2 years that many of the families were able to hug each other.

The trip to get there was grueling. It took us 28 hours because of all the bad weather plane delays in Chicago and elsewhere. It was 31 below when we got there!

Not one person complained once. They were just so ecstatic they were able to see their sons/brothers. It was really hard to say goodbye but it was the best Christmas present for everyone.

The last poem "In This Cold Lonely World" by Glenn is heartbreakng because he didn't have any family visit him. He read the poem and all the other moms went up and hugged him and told him he was loved.

Talk soon.

Family First

For starters I would like to thank Eric S. and the Free Minds Book Club and every other organization involved in making this a remote possibility.

For those who don't know we as a group are so fortunate to be seeing our families. While on the streets it's all good when we are chillin' with our mans and hanging out with females but in the end when all those people are nowhere to be found you will always have a family.

It feels almost like a Christmas morning to be seeing my mother today!

-Andre G., December 20, 2008

The following pieces were written a couple weeks ago, during an emotional family visit for a number of young men that was arranged by Free Minds and the Campaign For Youth Justice. These groups arranged for family to travel from Washington DC to Devils Lake, North Dakota, where the Lake Region Law Enforcement Center (Prison) is located. This is where the eight D.C. teenagers, who were tried as adults were sent to do their time. In DC you can be tried as an adult as young as 16 years old. Free Minds and the Campaign For Youth Justice - two wonderful DC non profits/CBOs got funding to escort and fly out family members to meet with their sons. During this emotional visit, they found time to write a few poems which are included. WE have also attached a few notes that were exchanged with this editor and Free Minds.

In This Cold Lonely World

Devils Lake, North Dakota

In this cold lonely world

I'm all alone

With nobody to hold

Nobody to love

Why does it feel so lonely?

So empty

Does anybody love me?

Somebody show me

I never see any good times

I never see any signs

Am I in the blind?

Somebody open the blinds and show me

In this cold lonely world

In this cold lonely world

-Glenn W. - December 20, 2008

What Does this Mean To Me?

This visit has been the best day since I've been locked up

Just to hug Grandma and feel Ma's touch

I never knew people outside my family could care so much

So thank you for everybody being able to make this happen

This is the best present
and it didn't need wrapping!

-Marquis H., December 20, 2008

Christmas Prayers

Chris:

Christmas here, Christmas there

Being with my family is a great Christmas gift
and a Christmas cheer

Donte:

Christmas here, Christmas there

Visiting my Lil brother is the best Christmas year

Chris:

Christmas here, Christmas there

My nephew was very happy when he heard

Santa and his reindeer

Donte:

Christmas here, Christmas there

I don't see my younger brother that often, it's rare

So I have to show him how much love we share

Chris:

Christmas here, Christmas there

Thank God for answering our Christmas prayers

-Christopher S. and Donte S., December 20, 2008

TBWO THE F O B E A T • W I T H O U T

•FREE MINDS BOOK CLUB AND WRITING WORKSHOP•

Picture

In times of joy you look past the trial and tribulations
 Just to know my mother would fly 1000 miles
 to see her child in visitation
 I see my mother just as I picture heaven
 I couldn't of ever asked for a better Christmas present
 With my family's love and holiday cheer
 I've not seen my mother in the last two years
 Today is the day that means the most in life
 To hug my folk and hold them tight
 Feels like I'm high above the sky in the cloud
 All I want is to make my mother proud
 Woman in my life that I'll forever respect
 Today is a day I'll never forget
 She helps me get through every obstacle
 Without all you people this wouldn't be possible
 So happy to see my mother and sister elated
 Just know you are appreciated

-Jermaine H., December 20, 2008

We would like to welcome back the Free Minds Book Club for another little insert of poems from the young men incarcerated in Washington D.C. County Jail. These are young men incarcerated in an adult facility, brilliant young minds with the gift of writing. We are privileged to have them be published in our publication. We all go through some of the same struggles no matter what city, set, state, or coast we are from. So without further ado we would like to present to you Washington D.C.'s finest! These following pieces were published with permission from The Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop.

Who I'll Be

I am a lot of things
 But you can call me Branden
 I come from the city of Washington, DC
 And also my mother's soul
 I stand for my one and only child
 That's something to stand for
 My face is very well known
 So you should know my face
 My hands are made for holding and helping
 My eyes can see a lot of things
 Coming to me and leaving from me
 I wear problems each and everyday
 So I know how to fix them
 I have a dream that one day the people of Earth
 Will never to have to want for anything
 I will put my best foot forward
 And try to make my dreams come true
 I am what other people think I am
 But I am one step away
 From being what I want to be.

-Branden

Hugging My Son

For me to say that I'm happy to see my son today
 is the understatement of 2008
 I'm ecstatic, I'm overjoyed
 I'm on cloud nine for sure
 Joy unspeakable, a feeling unbeatable!
 Hugging my son after two years
 there was absolutely no way that I could contain the tears.
 I know that he always hates to see my cry
 and although I really tried my best the emotion refused to die
 So here we are today after traveling very far
 by cab, by shuttle, by plane I dare not part my lips and complain
 It was all so very worth it to hug my son again

-Keela H., December 20, 2008

Missing Love

It's been quite sometime
 Since we've seen one another
 Once again reunited
 Not feeling slighted
 By the time and touch
 But still not enough
 Looking forward to better days
 We both have to get on our knees and pray
 Holding on to faith
 Reality will replace

-Arman and Kim J., December 20, 2008

Does God Love Me?

I love God and I love life
 But why he had to take my mother and father's life?
 I thought God was a personal savior and blessed people
 And I thought he loved them as they come
 But why he had to take them and leave me with no one?
 No one except my heart and loving myself
 No one else
 I love God because I believe in myself.

-Darnell

Trying to See

I sit in jail as my brilliant mind wanders off
 Trying to justify what it is out there I am trying to see
 For starters, I would love to see how the world
 Has moved on without us inmates in prison
 Being very well left behind
 I would also be trying to see how my schoolmates
 The class of 2009 strives to become our outstanding future
 I would like to see how the day-to-day conflicts escalate
 When they could be so easily defused
 If only they could have been discussed
 I am trying to see
 How I have become furious with life
 Wondering how I got myself into this ruthless situation
 I am trying to see how I can keep this stupid obstacle
 From taking a great toll on my life
 Yet, most of all I am trying to see
 In what adult's mind frame is justified
 A law that sends juveniles to an adult prison
 And throw our lives away at such a young age
 This is what I'm trying to see.

-Andre

Three Years Old

I am three years old
 My family calls me Stink
 I'm wearing some jeans with a white shirt
 One day I am with my sister
 So my shoes is untied
 That's when they get caught in this girl's bike
 Next thing I know she is dragging me
 And my whole leg is in the bike
 I cry in my mother's arms
 The whole night until they take me to get treated
 I am in a wheelchair for a while
 With a cast on my whole leg and half the other
 I am three years old.

-Steven

In this *cold lonely world*

I'm all alone

With nobody to hold

Nobody to love

Why does it feel so lonely?

So empty

Does anybody love me?

read the rest of Glenn W.'s BWO piece on page 74

